

1 Timothy 1:18-2:1 **Instructions on Prayer Part One**

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
www.calvarydcmetro.org

Prayer is talking with God – it's that simple. But we make it very complex and perhaps for that reason, we don't find ourselves doing it too much.

If prayer is a "big thing" we probably don't have time to do it right, which means we probably won't do it at all, but we'll still feel bad about not doing it because we know we should – kind of like exercising. We keep meaning to do it, you might even have your gym bag packed, but you just don't seem to make it there for one reason or another.

This morning we're going to dig into the issue of prayer – we're going to see that Paul said it was the most important thing Timothy should be doing. But the first thing I want to do is tell you, the point is not to make you feel guilty, the point is to learn and be moved, the point is to improve in our understanding of prayer and hopefully start talking to God a little bit more.

So I encourage you this morning to be ready to take some notes – to hear what God wants to say to you about how to talk to Him, and then to go out of here today, tomorrow, and for the rest of the week, praying more than you did last week, in the most natural way imaginable as you simply talk to your Heavenly Dad.

First though, we need to remember the setting for all of this...

1 Timothy 1:[18](#) *This charge I commit to you, son Timothy,*

What charge? Well remember what Paul had said in verses 3 and 4: "As I urged you when I went in to Macedonia – remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith."

The mission –

Paul had sent Timothy to Ephesus on a mission to stand up for right doctrine and he wants Timothy to do this

according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

Last week we saw that Jesus had PUT Paul into the ministry, and Paul was thankful for it because Jesus had also ENABLED him for the ministry. Now Paul is reminding Timothy that the same thing is true for him – Timothy has been given a ministry, a place to serve, and it's a challenging place to serve, but he was also given the spiritual enabling, or gifts,

that he needed to meet the challenge. If you remember, we said last week that God's calling IS His enabling – the two go hand in hand. If God has called you to something, He also promises the strength and the wisdom to be able to do it. He doesn't leave you stranded. And that goes as much for parenting as it does preaching. If God puts you in a situation, He promises to give you what is necessary to serve Him there.

- Apparently Timothy was ordained for ministry at some point and prophetic words were spoken over him. Now Paul is encouraging him to remember this event and draw strength from it.

Now, you say, OK that's great if you've been ordained, but very few of us are. True. But many, many, more of you have had some form of a call to ministry – remember, last week we looked at 1 Corinthians 12 and saw that every Christian has been given some sort of gift for the sake of glorifying God and serving others.

So this equipping for ministry and the call to use that gift in ministry is a kind of ordination from God instead of man to serve the King in some capacity, and it's a very important thing because we draw strength from the call – it holds us in ministry when nothing else will.

Ministry, or serving, isn't always fun. Sometimes it's work. And, according to Paul's pen here in verse 18, sometimes it's war.

Paul was regularly in fights over the faith. Not always physical ones, often times it was just stuff like this that he is facing right now – friction in relationships. But this was reality for Paul, and now for Timothy, and we shouldn't find it surprising if we have some difficulties too.

Remember, we worship, serve and follow a man that was murdered because people didn't like Him. So don't expect everyone to like you or for your beliefs and opinions to be welcomed or understood all the time. If you feel like you're in a constant spiritual battle with someone in your life – you just might be! You may be waging the good warfare.

And yet we, like Timothy, should conduct ourselves:

[19](#) having faith and a good conscience,

The Manner

- this is the manner in which we should approach ministry

which some having rejected,

apparently, some others have not done the work of God with faith and a good conscience, and a result

concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, [20](#) of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Oh man, there's a theological argument just waiting to be opened up right there! Did they "fall away" or did they "go out from us because they were not of us?"

You can't ever make the call – it's focused on the symptoms. The disease is separation from God – correct that and you won't have to worry about the consequences.

But here's the big take away for all of us: *Conscious disobedience will kill your spiritual life.* If God keeps telling you to do or not to do something and you keep ignoring it or tuning it out, pretending you didn't hear or burying it with logic and reason, answer me this – are you strengthening or weakening your relationship with Him? And whose fault is it? You see, God never moves away from us, but sometimes we move away from Him.

One of the ways we keep that from happening, one of the ways we keep the lines of communication open, is through prayer, which Paul brings up next.

Paul has reminded Timothy of the mission – to guard the pure doctrine of Christianity, and manner in which he was to carry it out – with faith and a good conscience; and now he gives him the method, which is to begin everything with prayer.

The Method

2:[1](#) Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* 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. [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. [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](#) for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ, *and* not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

[8](#) I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

What is to be the method of Timothy's ministry? It's prayer.

Let's make a few notes about prayer:

The fact of prayer

God expects to hear from us – consider how remarkable this is, that we have ACCESS to God! And we don't have to go to some specific place to be heard by Him. We don't have to burn the right incense or spin some prayer wheel endlessly. We don't have to throw up this attempt at piety and hope someone up there hears.

Hebrews 4:16 says we are to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray He didn't say, “Um, that's something I've been meaning to talk to you about – you really don't need to keep calling Him all the time, He's kind of busy running the universe and all. If He needs anything, He'll call you, OK.”

No! He taught them to pray because God wants to hear from you – God wants to hear from you! Think about that some time – *God* wants to hear from *you*. You might not be able to get an appointment with your boss; you might not be able to get so and so to return your calls or your emails; you might be waiting on such and such to find time to review your submission, but *God wants to hear from you*.

The priority of prayer

Paul says Timothy should be doing this “first of all” – the sense is here is first in priority, not just in the order of events. Prayer is more important than action. The two must go together – they are a married couple – prayer and action are tied together, but when they come to a doorway, one goes in before the other. Action is the gentlemen and he holds the door for prayer.

Oswald Chambers, "Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work."

But we often don't value prayer because it's hard to measure it's value. Honestly, it's hard to feel good about praying for an issue for 15 minutes when you only have an hour to work on it. Most of us, if we have something to do, would rather jump right into doing it.

And I'm not even talking about specific tasks here – what about just waking up in the morning – do we just jump right into the day – check your phone or your Blackberry, or your computer and see what emails or Facebook posts you've received – or do you start off the day by taking a minute to commit it to God – to remember that you are His servant and this day, as much as you can, will be about serving Him in every conversation you have, every task you do, and every choice you make?

You see, here's the problem gang – we want action. We want adventure. We want drama. Or we want information – tell me what's going on so I can prepare for it or start working on it. But the first thing we need is to spend time in prayer talking *to* God and in the Bible hearing *from* God. We need to start off on the right foot by having our hearts and our souls prepared for the challenges of the day.

And this doesn't have to be complex – sometimes you can just lay there in bed for a minute and recite the Lord's prayer, thinking about each phrase as you go through it. And then get up and take on the day. But you have to remember, that you have the privilege of addressing Almighty God and before you check what anyone else has to say to you today, you might want to check what He has to say first.

- Andrew Bonar, a church leader and great man of prayer from the 1800s, had three rules:
 - o 1. Not to speak to any man before speaking to Jesus;
 - o 2. Not to do anything with his hands until he had been on his knees;
 - o 3. Not to read the papers until he had read his Bible.

That's a two-hundred year old challenge that is worthy of our attention today.

Once again, either there is something to this or there isn't. Either praying about stuff makes a difference or it doesn't. It can't be both. So which is it?

I argue that praying does make a difference.

And I'll share with you something shocking. It's possible to fill your life with all kinds of busyness, all kinds of "success" even, and still have regrets because you later realize you did it all on your own and you missed out on the opportunities you had to spend with God.

Less than one year ago, on December 20, 2010 - Greta Van Susterern interviewed Billy Graham.

- o Greta: "If you were to do things over again, would you do it differently?"
- o Billy: "Yes. I would study more, I would pray more, travel less, take less speaking engagements, I took too many of them, in too many places around the world, if I had it to do over again I would spend more time in meditation and in prayer, just telling the Lord how much I love Him and adore Him and am looking forward to the time we're going to spend together for eternity."¹
- o She went on to ask him what he meant – did he really regret speaking at all of his crusades. His answer, no, that's not what he meant. But he spent a lot of time traveling around to different conferences and churches and all sorts of other events – everyone wanted to have Billy Graham come and speak, and he said he should have turned down more of those opportunities because he so busy traveling that "I didn't have time to think and study and pray."

So let me ask you – what do you think is so important that you have to rush into it? What is so important that you push past prayer or rush prayer so that you can get on to it?

Are you spending your life on things that seem so important now but which you may regret, or which might not seem so shiny a little farther down the road?

Well, your distraction isn't unique – and it's not just you and Billy that deal with it:

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rhf3vat1jNU>

The problem of prayer

Paul has to exhort that it be done! That alone should tell you that even people like Timothy who have whole letters in the Bible addressed to them have a hard time praying.

And even he's not the only one – remember what the disciples were doing when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before He was arrested and led away to be crucified? Jesus asked Peter, James and John to pray while He went off and prayed by Himself, but they couldn't do it – they kept falling asleep.

Prayer is very rarely an automatic or easy thing. You need to know that so you don't have the wrong expectations.

Help for Prayer

Meditate on Scripture – take verses, mull them over and let them lead you into prayer.

- Deep, rich, spontaneous moments of prayer don't just happen every morning or every evening. It's easy to fall into a rut. So warm the engine with Scripture.
- Memorize verses, highlight them, or write them down on a note card. Maybe each Sunday you can pick a few verses that you will focus on the coming week and let them prime your heart and give you something to begin praying about.
- This happened to me just this week with Ps 103:8-10
 - o “The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse us,
Nor will He harbor His anger forever;
He does not treat us as our sins deserve
Or repay us according to our iniquities.

Now there is something you can start praying about and head out from there into other issues.

We'll stop here this morning, and we'll pick things up again next week when we'll look at how we should pray – everything from what posture we should have, to what we should be asking for and saying.

But as you go from here this week – remember, talking about prayer is like taking flying lessons – you can spend a lot of time learning and studying and discussing, but it's not really worth anything until you actually climb in the cockpit and touch the stick.

Don't accept a sermon full of talking about prayer as a substitute for actually praying this week. We've talked about it, now make sure you to talk to Him.