

1 Timothy 2:1-8 An Exhortation to Pray Part Three

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We've been talking about prayer for the past several weeks because Paul is admonishing Timothy to pray and to get others to pray about the situation down in Ephesus.

We've talked about how to pray, when to pray, what position we should assume when we pray and we've talked about why we don't pray and why our prayers sometimes are not answered.

But we haven't yet talked about what Paul was talking about originally and that is praying for others. So this morning we're going to look at that issue and we're going to see what Paul's ultimate goal was.

1 Timothy 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;

So we see that Paul says we should be praying “for all men,” he then goes on to talk especially about “kings and all who are in authority” but we'll get to that in a minute. For now, I just want us to see that yes, we should pray for other people.

I think we get that, in fact, if you have a group of people together and you say, does anyone have any prayer requests? You can count on getting requests for other people. Now, one reason for this is because it is easier for me to ask you to pray something for my aunt, or sister, or co-worker, than it is to open up about what is going on in my life and ask for prayer for that. I'm not going to go there this morning, but I just want to point that out in passing.

So, we can, and do pray for others. But let me ask you this question. What do we typically pray about?

Health issues. Diseases, illnesses, injuries, accidents – things that cause pain and discomfort.

That's all right, but in order to understand these things we have to remember that there is much more at play here – where does disease come from? Remember the consequences of the first sin?

- destroyed our relationship with each other
- destroyed the environment – brought death, disease, disaster, and deformity
- brought in fear, doubt, worry, and shame
- severed our relationship with a holy God – we rebelled.

HERE IS THE POINT – we spend most of our time focused on the disease and usually ignore the cause – sin. Not necessarily sin in the individual’s life, but sin gave birth to death and disease. We want healing from cancer, or some exotic disease, or just from our seasonal allergies, but we rarely, if ever, stop to make the connection between this disease and its cause. **Not it’s pathological cause; it’s theological cause.** Death, disease and deformity are just reminders that we live in a fallen world.

And here is why this makes a difference – because if all we see is the physical condition, that’s all we pray for. But if we recognize that the physical condition is affecting a spiritual being, because we all have souls, we can pray for the eternal soul that is enduring the disease or condition or injury as well and that will make our prayers take on a whole different tenor.

Instead of just praying for God to heal them or to give wisdom to the doctors and nurses, what if we also prayed, “and God would you please reveal Yourself to them during this time in way that they would have never otherwise known. Father, please give them a peace that passes all understanding as they go through this difficult time, and whether You heal them today or next month, may they walk through this valley of the shadow of death knowing that the Good Shepherd is there with them.”

It’s OK to pray for physical needs, and they are what catch our attention because they are visible, or diagnosable, but we don’t pray for spiritual needs anywhere near as often because they aren’t as visible, but they’re even more important.

Let’s ask three questions about praying for healing.

Should we pray for others and their trials? YES

Phil 1:19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [20](#) according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

Paul believes that both are going to be at play – their prayers and God’s supply. Not just one or the other. Remember last week I told you William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army said “Pray as if everything depended on your prayer.”

Should we pray for their healing? YES

James 5: 13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. [14](#) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them

pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. [15](#) And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. [16](#) Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

- Let the sick person call – demonstrates faith
- Elders – plural, I try to pray with others so we know it was God not a single man
- The role of sin – sometimes it seems sin can lead to sickness. It's a good question to ask.

Will God always heal if we just ask enough or in the right way, or make the right plea bargain? NO.

Epaphroditus – nearly died from some sickness while visiting Paul from Philippi
Timothy – from now on take “a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.” (1 Timothy 5:23)
Paul – thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7f)

Keep this in mind – this is all in the life and sphere of influence of an incredibly Godly man. A man who was tight with God, a man who most of us would say, “I want to be like Paul.” God used him to raise a man from the dead, to heal people from their diseases and to do all kinds of other miracles – legit, proven, here’s the evidence miracles. But he couldn’t heal himself and he couldn’t heal all of his friends.

Why is that? I believe it’s because physical healing isn’t as important as we think it is. It is important. But sooner or later something else is going to break too. We’re all falling apart – we’re all hurting full speed toward termination. Death will come in different ways and at different times for all of us, but it will come.

The Bible speaks of several people being raised from the dead through the course of history. But every one of them eventually died again. Their resurrection was temporary – except of course for One.

So, what that tells us is, physical healing, as desirable as it may be, is only a temporary solution.

When Paul encourages Timothy to pray and to get others praying, in response to the problems going on in Ephesus, he doesn’t say, “just go down there and start praying for healing. Clear out their hospitals, empty out their sickbeds.” No, he says you should be praying for their salvation.

1 Timothy 2:[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.

My challenge to you – never pray for someone’s physical condition without praying for their soul as well.

The soul is worth far more than the flesh. In just a few chapters Paul will make that comparison even more plain (1 Tim 4:8): “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” Physical health and healing are good and desirable and we should ask for them, but we need to remember, that on the eternal plane, they are less valuable than godliness and in fact, *the absence of wellness in many cases leads people into a greater knowledge of God and His provision.*

Which brings us back to the original intent of this passage we’ve been launching out of here in 1 Timothy. Paul is urging Timothy specifically to pray for government leaders so that everyone can live a peaceful life and pursue godliness and reverence and that this time of peace can lead to more opportunities to present the gospel.

When we pray for others, we typically pray for people who are close to us. Paul is encouraging Timothy to pray for people he isn’t close to. And people who are not Christians. At the time Paul was writing to Timothy there were no known Christian leaders in any government – local, regional, and certainly not the emperor of Rome. Now, since we don’t have the original postmark, we can’t say for certain, but most scholars believe Paul wrote this letter to Timothy at the time Nero was on the throne in Rome, and Nero was not a good dude. But none of that matters in one sense, because you can still, and should still, pray for leaders, even when you disagree with them.

Fiddler on the Roof – Story of Jews living in Russia back in 1905 when it was ruled by a tsar who was causing all kinds of problems for them, forcing them to move from their village.

- Rabbi is asked: “Is there a blessing for the tsar?” IOW, what can we pray for him?
- Answer: “May God bless and keep the tsar...far away from us!”

That’s kind of the idea here – Paul says Timothy should be praying for the government **so 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, who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Now that is interesting to me as well, because Paul says God desires people come to the knowledge of the truth. In other words, if you don’t know Jesus, you don’t know the truth.

In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father, except through Me.” It’s a very close-minded, exclusive claim to make, so you have to wrestle with the choices – was He lying? Was He ignorant? Or was He telling the truth?

Paul goes on to say:

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.

We are entering into the Christmas season when everyone likes to celebrate the birth of Jesus. But what did that little baby come to do? He came to grow up, to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God, to live the life that we could not live, and then die in our place.

We often forget that **the only reason we have Christmas is because what we really needed was Easter.** We don't keep the two events so clearly connected in our minds, but **the only reason we had the crib is because we needed the cross.**

Paul says there is one God – not many, just one. And there is one mediator between God and men – the Man Christ Jesus – fully God, but fully man – a process nearly impossible to explain because it has never happened before or since, there's nothing to compare it to, nothing to say, it's kind of like...

And yet this man, who was God, came to give Himself a ransom.

Earlier this morning we talked about the Fall and what happened when the perfect man and the perfect woman turned their backs on God.

Now that I'm a dad, I understand the problem of humanity better than ever before. When kids disobey their parents, they deserve to be disciplined – now you name your style: spanking, timeout, restriction, whatever, everyone agrees you cannot raise a child without ever disciplining him or her. The same thing is true with citizens – the government makes laws and then has a police force to enforce them. You can't just have laws and then never enforce them.

Well, God has laws, and we break them. Which means what? We ought to be disciplined. The only problem is, none of us can stand His discipline. We can't pay His fees and we can't fulfill His restrictions, and we certainly can't take His swats. So what are we to do? We rebel against God, we walk out the door of His house, and we discover there is no handle on the door outside. If, somehow, we decide we want back in, there is no way for us to make it happen. He has to open the door and come outside to us.

So He did.

And on the cross, Jesus absorbed the full wrath of God – He took the fullness of the discipline we deserve for rebelling against God. He paid our ransom and won us back. And now, for those that will receive it, He stands at the door to God's house and holds open the door that has no handle on the outside and shouts and He calls out – “enter in here all who wish.”

But there's only one door. The one He holds open. There aren't many doors. There's just one. But that door is open to all men. Remember, we should be praying for all men. Jesus came as a Jew, but the message of what He has done is for all men.

The Jews looked at the world as if there were only two classifications of people – Jews and Gentiles, or non-Jews. Paul, a Jew himself, says that God called him to bring this message of salvation by grace to people who were not Jews because it is message for all men.

And it is the most important message we can bring to people. We need to pray for others, we need to pray for their needs, including their health and their physical needs. But most of all, we need to pray for their souls. We need to pray that they would find the door that leads to the Great Physician's house. And we need to pray, that whether or not they are healed of their physical ailments, that the wounds of their souls are healed.

God doesn't promise any of us a pain free existence. But He does promise us His Hand, and He has given us His Son. If you can't make sense out of why you or someone you love is suffering, and many times you cannot, *just remember what Jesus suffered for us, and why.* **The pain, the death, the diseases, the disasters and the deformities we face are a result of the sin that has entered the world.** And as much as we may want Him to relieve our pain, what we need most is for Him to save and strengthen our souls.

Father – help us to make sense of this – help us to know what to pray for ourselves and the people we love – help us know how to comfort their flesh and yet be most concerned about their souls. That they, and we, would grow closer to You in times of pain and discomfort - and that we would look forward to that day when You deliver us completely from the effects of sin.