

1 Timothy

#3 - 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7



OVERVIEW – 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7

In chapter 1 Paul has raised one of the key reasons he wrote this letter to his ministry mentee Timothy i.e., to (remind Timothy of the) charge that he counter false teaching arising from within the congregation and stick to the right teaching of the law (1:3-11) and the gospel which together focuses on King Jesus (vv 12-17). This was (and is) hard work for it entails facing opposition and so requires much encouragement in ‘sound doctrine’ (vv 10-11) for Timothy (and us) to persevere faithfully and ‘fight the battle well’ (vv 18-20).

The command to pray (v 1-2a)

How was Timothy to counter false teaching in the church in Ephesus (1:3-5, 18)? It may surprise us that the first step in Paul’s strategy is prayer, and not prayer for God’s household but for ‘*all* people’ including ‘*all* those in authority’ outside the church (2:1-2). To be sure, ‘In 1 Timothy 2, however, Paul’s purview is more public worship attitude and practice than personal or individual behaviour in the world at large;’¹ nevertheless, we acknowledge the discipling impact public church gatherings have on our individual lives. ‘Petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving’ are not separate kinds of prayer but overlapping terms.² ‘The vast dimensions (emphasized by italics [above]) of God’s ambitions for believers and their intercessory role in world redemption require that the church look to him with large expectations and copious prayerful attentiveness.’³

The outcome of such prayer (v 2b)

The outcome, says Paul, is that ‘we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness [or, “dignity”],’ not conveying a kind of ‘silent submission’ but reflecting a *community* (‘lives’ is singular in the Greek) of good order, peace and mutual respect (see also vv 11-12), which enables a Godward attentiveness (for the opposite of godliness is not *ungodliness* but *godlessness*; cf. 3:16; 6:6).⁴ The church’s first step to counter the disorder brought by false teaching *within* is to pray for the good order of society and the salvation of all people *outside the church* – what a humbling and powerful privilege!

The reason: God’s heart for sinners (vv 3-7)

Paul reassures Timothy of the goodness of this approach (v 3), for it reflects God’s very heart for the salvation of sinners. The more peaceful a society the more freely the gospel will be proclaimed, and therefore the more people will hear God’s message of salvation and be saved. Fundamental to God’s heart is a desire for ‘all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth’ (v 4). He then supports this statement about God with three further statements about the uniqueness of God and the way of salvation (v 5): first, there is one God who is himself one in essence or being;⁵ second, he has given one mediator (or, go-between) with all fallen humanity – he himself became human in Jesus Christ and died on the cross to purchase his people’s freedom (as the image of ‘ransom’ indicates).⁶ Third, this very event has occurred at God’s ‘proper’ timing (v 6). In other words, God sent Jesus into the world to demonstrate his heart for sinners by dying on the cross at just the right time according to God’s plan. Praying for all, including those in authority, outside the church keeps the church’s focus on the salvation of sinners and helps prevent it from focussing on inward ‘contraversial speculations’ (1:4). Central to the mission of God’s household is speaking of the King who entered the world to save lost and rebellious sinners.

In v 7 Paul reassures Timothy of the trustworthiness of what he’s writing for Paul is Jesus’ uniquely appointed messenger and teacher to bring the gospel of salvation to ‘Gentiles’ (or, *the nations* cf. 1:1).

¹ Robert W. Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Pillar New Testament Commentary), 144.

² Yarborough, 146, who goes on to write after surveying Paul’s use of prayer words across the New Testament: ‘The point is that there be an abundance or prayers appropriate to worship occasions and concerns, not a precise delineation of prayer types or techniques,’ 147.

³ Yarborough, 147-148.

⁴ Philip D. Jensen, *1 & 2 Timothy For You*, 55.

⁵ Paul’s statement ‘there is one God’ could equally be translated ‘God is one,’ echoing a key statement of Israel’s worship in Deuteronomy 6:4, ‘Hear O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.’

⁶ The New Testament uses four main images to describe what happened at the cross. Each of these images are taken from different arenas of ancient life: *justification* from the law court (e.g., Romans 3:23-24), *propitiation* from the temple (e.g., 1 John 2:1-2), *reconciliation* from the household (e.g., 2 Corinthians 5:21), and *redemption* or *ransom* from the slave market (e.g., Matthew 20:28; Romans 3:24 and here in 1 Timothy 2:6). For more see John Stott’s excellent book, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006 [3rd ed.]).

GETTING STARTED

1. When have you experienced a kind of reordering in your life? What was the impact of this change?

INTO THE TEXT

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-7

2. For whom should the church pray for, and why might we find this surprising in light of 1:3-20?
3. What is the outcome of such prayers?
4. How does Paul's description of the church community in v 2 contrast with our present cultural moment and ambitions?
5. Look up the following verses:
 - a. 1 Timothy 3:16
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:7-8
 - c. 1 Timothy 6:3-6, 11
 - d. 2 Timothy 3:5
 - e. Titus 1:1

As best you can, summarise what 'godliness' is in one short statement.

6. How is God described in 2:3-5? Why is this significant?
7. How has God determined that people be saved? How does this inform our prayers?
8. What does it mean for King Jesus to be 'a ransom' (see also Matthew 20:28; Romans 3:21-24)? Why might this be surprising in light of how else he is described in this letter? (See 1:17; 6:15-16)

TAKEAWAY

9. As you reflect on the people in your life, including those in authority over you, who comes to mind? Share with the group and pray for them together.
10. What is one new thing God may be calling you to do to join his church in prayer?