

I Urge You to Pray

All Kinds of Prayer for All Kinds of People

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Sermon Series: *Timothy's Charge*

Topic: Prayer

Introduction

Review: Where We've Been

We are now in our fifth week in a sermon series through the apostle Paul's first epistle to Timothy. Today we begin chapter two where we find Paul writing to Timothy and instructing the church, "*I urge you to pray.*" Why the sense of urgency? What is so important about prayer?



So far we've seen Paul's urgent (1:3) charge to Timothy, to warn certain persons not to teach false doctrine or be devoted to the pointless and fruitless things. Rather they were to be devoted to the gospel, which centers on the fact that "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Tim 1:15). Paul charged Timothy not to allow any teaching to corrupt or overshadow this truth and he instructed him to fight against this false teaching with faith! Today we will that another way to fight false teaching is through prayer.

Overview: Where We're Going

As we come to chapter 2, we see a shift in Paul's focus. Yet in this shift, that which is uppermost in his mind is prayer! Thus, today we will consider 1) the urgency of prayer, 2) the variety of prayer, 3) the aim of prayer, and 4) the pleasantness of prayer.

- I. Intro: A Sweet Salutation
 - A. Who is Paul?
 - B. What is an apostle?
 - C. Who is Timothy?
- II. The Urgent Charge to Timothy
 - A. Warn Certain Persons
 - B. Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners
 - C. Wage War by Faith
- III. The Urgent Charge to the Church
 - A. I Urge You to Pray
 - B. One God One Mediator

II. I Urge You to Pray

The main idea of this next section is the *urgent charge to the church to be engaged in prayer*. Prayer is sometimes a bit confusing. What exactly is prayer? What does prayer do or not do?

Why does God command us to pray? Does prayer supply God with information or motivation which he otherwise lacks? Does prayer really change anything?

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people... (1 Timothy 2:1).

First of all. That Paul would now write, "*First of all,*" seems a bit strange, since this is not the beginning of the letter. He is 467 words¹ into this letter and yet, *now* he writes, "First of all." This alerts us to the fact that he has shifted his thinking to a new topic. The letter began with Paul's charge to Timothy² and now begins his *charge to the church* at Ephesus. From this point on, Paul will primarily be "preoccupied with activities and behavior within the worship assembly."³ The topics he now takes up are no longer directed personally to Timothy, but rather to the corporate life of the church in Ephesus and how the church should be ordered and governed, such as how men and women are to conduct themselves in the gathered assembly (2:1-15) and the qualifications for church leaders (ie. elders [3:1-7] and deacons [3:8-13]).

A. The Urgency of Prayer (v.1)

In regard to the corporate life of the church, the first item on Paul's mind is *prayer*. We know that prayer is on his mind because he uses four synonyms of prayer, "*supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings.*" Prayer is foremost on his mind, because God is foremost. And this call to prayer is *urgent*.

Urge. This is not the first time Paul has used this word. He first used it in 1:3 where he "*urged*" Timothy to remain in Ephesus and set in order that which was out of order. We saw there that the word means to *strongly encourage and earnestly request*. The word is a call that is serious and supreme. It is a pleading call for proper prioritization of *prayer*. Prayer is to be a priority of the church.

Here at Hope we have **five core values**, worship, prayer, teaching, community, and outreach. The word *Worship* refers not only to the musical portion of our weekly gatherings, but also reminds us that all of life is to be focused on displaying and honoring the glory of God. *Worship* is first because God is first. *Prayer* is our second core value. Prayer is a primary part of all that we do as a church. The elders and Worship Team pray each Sunday morning before the first worship service. We pray at the beginning, the middle, and the end our worship services. And we have people waiting to pray with you at the conclusion of every worship service. We pray every Tuesday evening. Our LIFE groups pray. Prayer is vitally important to us. Prayer is urgent because God is ultimate.

¹ Word count based upon ESV translation.

² Timothy is specifically named in 1:2 and 1:18.

³ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 144.

Definition of Prayer

The most basic definition of prayer is simply *talking with God*. More specifically *prayer is direct dialogue and conscious communication with God the Father through Christ Jesus the Son*.

This is a Christian definition of prayer. People in every religion pray. However, Christians know we can only pray to the Creator of the universe on the basis of what Jesus has accomplished. No sinful, imperfect human being has the right to ask anything of the holy, perfect Father. But through the atoning work of Christ, he *invites* his children to pray to the Father in his name!⁴

Prayer is not primarily for God, but rather it is for us! God does not learn new information in prayer, we do. He knows our needs before we even ask (Mt 6:8). The purpose of prayer is not that God be conformed to our will, but rather that we be conformed to his. Prayer involves both speaking and listening. It is both dialogue and communication. Prayer is not merely a human monologue in the divine ear. Prayer involves speaking, waiting, listening, and watching.⁵ And the result will be that we say to him, "Your will be done," not him saying to us, "Your will be done."

Forty Days of Prayer Discernment

At the end of April (11 days go) we completed 40 days of prayer asking the Lord, "Are you at this time inviting Hope to plant a new church?" We appointed 8 people to pray on behalf of the congregation, we as elders were praying, and we invited you to pray also. In the end, both the prayer team and the elder team landed in the same place. We both discerned that the Lord is saying, "Not yet, but there is some preparation that needs to be done before we can move forward." So now we elders will be asking the Lord to show us in what ways we need to prepare as we look forward.

Paul urges the prioritization of prayer in the church so that we will be doing his will.

B. The Variety of Prayer (v.1)

After highlighting the urgency of prayer, now Paul highlights *the variety of prayer*.

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 1 Timothy 2:1 (ESV)

Paul uses four different words to describe prayer. Each of these words is plural.

1. *Supplications* - the word (δέησις *deēsis*) can also be translated as 'requests' or 'petitions.' Its meaning flows from a "need or lack"⁶ and carries a sense of "earnest and urgent"

⁴ John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26.

⁵ Matthew 26:41.

⁶ Heinrich Greeven, "δέομαι, Δέησις Προσδέομαι," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 40.

pleading.”⁷ The general use of this word refers to dialoging with God about one’s own needs (see also Phil 4:16; Rom 10:1; Eph 6:18).

2. *Prayers* - this word (προσευχή *proseuchē*) is a more general word⁸ and always refers to speech directed to God. We might think of this as devotional dialogue or common conversation with God about anything and everything.
3. *Intercessions* - this word (ἐντευξις *enteuxis*) is rare and only appears here and in 1 Tim 4:5. However Paul uses a cognate verb to speak of the Holy Spirit’s “intercession” (Rom 8:27) and of Christ’s “intercession” for the saints (Rom 8:34; cf. Heb 7:25). The word appears to refer to boldness before God on behalf of another.⁹ We might easily think of this word as dialoging with God about the needs of another person.
4. *Thanksgivings* - this word (εὐχαριστία *eucharistia*) refers to giving thanks or expressing gratitude to God. The word is used to describe “the Jewish practice of giving thanks before meals”¹⁰ while Paul often uses the word in the opening of his letters as he gives thanks to God for the churches to whom he is writing (Phil 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3 [cf. 2:13]; Phlm 4). We might think of this word as dialoging with God in gratitude for his many blessings and gifts.

The prayer life of the church (ie. which is composed of individuals) ought to be varied. The different words point to different situations in which prayer is offered to God the Father. There are abundant ways to pray to God just as there are abundant reasons to pray to Him. There is not one way to pray. There are many. We should pray to him when we find ourselves in need, when there is no particular need, when others are in need, and when we want to give him thanks. In summary, we could easily agree with the apostle Paul who instructed us to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thess 5:17). The connecting thought that leads to the next verse seems to be that *all kinds of prayer is needed for all kinds of people*. We see this as we consider the aims of prayer.

C. The Aims of Prayer (v.1b-2)

At the end of the first verse, Paul turns to the *aims of prayer*. Paul offers examples to the church regarding for whom and about what to pray.

1. **For all people** (v.1) Paul is certainly not instructing the church to pray for every specific individual person on earth, for that would be impossible. He is teaching the church to pray for *all kinds and classes* of people (including their enemies). No one is to be excluded from

⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 407.

⁸ Ralph Earle, “1 Timothy,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 357.

⁹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 147.

¹⁰ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 80.

the prayer life of the church. We can see this from the two examples Paul gives. *Kings* and those in *high positions* are subgroups of the category “*all people*.” They are examples of the kind and class of people for whom the church is to pray.

Paul may be writing this in light of the particular Jewish bent¹¹ of these false teachers and their tendency of Jews not to accept or seek fellowship with Gentiles. Their “kings” were Gentiles as were those in “high positions” over them. At this time, Nero (A.D. 54-68) was emperor and not all governors were favorable towards the ever expanding number of Christians. Nero hated Christians and persecuted them fiercely. Nero allowed Christians to be killed under his reign. Paul and Peter were both executed under his administration. Christians were often misunderstood as subversive revolutionaries because they refused to worship Caesar as God. However, by committing themselves to prayer for governmental authorities and living exemplarily lives they would silence these misunderstandings and lies.

Pray to the King of kings

Praying to God in regard to kings and all in high positions is a confession that God is the King of all kings and the Highest of the high. The church is to pray to the Most High in authority with regard to those in positions of lesser authority. The King of heaven is sovereign over all kings on earth. God’s word is abundantly clear that God governs all kings and earthly authorities.

¹ The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)

Recall what Jesus said to Pilate.

¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” John 19:11 (ESV)

Prayer to God on behalf of kings and people in high positions is a reminder of the greater power and position of the Most High, who is God almighty. It was the Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar who concluded, “*Most High [God] rules the kingdoms of men and gives them to whomever he wills. He does according to his will in heaven and on earth and none can stay his hand*” (Dan 4:32, 35). So what should be prayed for regarding kings and those in high positions? What is the aim to which the church should pray?

2. *That we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way* (v.2). Paul has a particular kind of lifestyle in mind as the ideal for the Christian. It one marked by peace, quiet, godliness, and dignity. This is the kind of life that kings and governors should not object to. Paul uses two couplets to describe the ideal Christian lifestyle.

¹¹ See 1:4 with their devotion to “endless genealogies” and their emphasis on the law, which are of particular interest among Jews.

- a) *peaceful and quiet*. The focus here is on the external circumstances of physical life. This is the world outside of us. These words relate to the state of our home. The word '*peaceful*' occurs only here in the NT, but it means to be "quiet, tranquil. The basic idea is that of restfulness unmarred by disturbance."¹² The word '*quiet*' does not mean not speaking. The root word is used by Paul to describe what happened on his way to Jerusalem when the believers in Caesarea were weeping and pleading with Paul not to go to Jerusalem because they knew that there he would be arrested and beaten. Paul told them that he was willing to do all necessary for the name of Jesus and asked them to stop breaking his heart by trying to dissuade him.

¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased (lit. "were quiet") and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done." Acts 21:14 (ESV)

They were quite, and then they said! They "ceased" talking about what they wanted. They were "quiet" in regard to preventing Paul from going to Jerusalem. They were "*quiet*" in one way but "*said*" in another. This word does not mean not speaking, but rather it means without contention, or discord, or disturbance. Paul uses this same root word in his letter to the Thessalonians when he instructs them to,

"...aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ¹² so that you may walk properly before outsiders..." 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (ESV)

Thus, Paul is instructing the church to pray that kings and those in high positions of authority would work to bring about "social, political, and economic stability conducive to everyone's well-being, that of Christians included."¹³

- b) *godly and dignified*. The focus here is on the internal circumstances of spiritual life. This refers to the inside of us. These words relate to the state of our soul. The word '*godly*' (εὐσέβεια *eusebeia*) means being,

"totally consecrated to God, to his worship, and to the fulfillment of his will ... and it places emphasis on the outward appearances of worship and piety in honor of God ... [and denotes] an extreme devotion to accomplish the divine will."¹⁴

¹² Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 357.

¹³ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 149.

¹⁴ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 83.

A more concise definition is “A God-directed reverence that has power for living a life pleasing to God.”¹⁵ Paul later in this letter commands Timothy to “*Train yourself for godliness*” (1 Tim 4:7). And Paul warns Timothy to avoid those people who “*have the appearance of godliness, but deny it power*” (2 Tim 3:5). Thus, godliness is reverential attitude and behavior that flows from true knowledge of God. It is both thinking and acting like Christ. It is looking like him outwardly but also allowing the Holy Spirit to work powerfully within the heart to conform the desires of the heart into alignment and agreement with the holy desires of Jesus.

The word ‘*dignified*’ is a word we have all but forgotten. This quality is required for elders and deacons. It is a quality expected of older men and women in the church. The word refers to behavior that is worthy of esteem and respect. It belies a solemnity and seriousness in comportment that is the opposite of flippant, trivial, banality. It refers to one who lives honorably and commendably. This is a word worthy of our contemplation and understanding.

Summary. The aim of prayer of the church is to pray all kinds of prayer for all kinds of people. Prayer is to be offered for *kings* and *all in high positions*, that they would use their power and authority rightly so that there is a stable environment that enables a peaceable society where worship and devotion to God is manifested in respectful, Christlike, honorable behavior.

D. The Pleasantness of Prayer (v.3-4)

Finally, we see the pleasantness of prayer.

³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)

This is good and pleasing in the sight of God. What is good and pleasing in the sight of God? Everything he just wrote in vs. 1-2. It is good for the church to gather together and pray for kings and governors and then reap the benefit of a social order that allows God’s people to do all that he has called them to do.

Praying all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people is both *good* and *pleasing*. It is *good* and pleasant to pray for people. And it is good and pleasant to pray to God the Father. It is good and pleasant to dialogue and converse with God the Father. It is right to go before the Lord God and talk to him in all kinds of ways on behalf of all kinds of people.

And this is *pleasing* to God. Such prayer is not bothersome to him. He delights in it. God is pleased when his children pray to him. He is never too busy to listen to his children dialogue with him. God is never pressed for time. He has plenty of time. He is never too busy for us, but are we too busy for him? He is never so consumed with running the universe that he

¹⁵ John Piper in *Look At the Book* video “What Does It Mean to Be Godly and Dignified?” Available here: <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/what-does-it-mean-to-be-godly-and-dignified> accessed 8 May 2026.

is not pleased to commune with his kids. *All kinds of prayer for all kinds of people is good and pleasing to God.*

God of our Savior. Paul mentioned the fact that God is our Savior back at in the opening words of this letter (1:1). Salvation is God's idea. He sent Jesus into this world "to save sinners" (1:15).

Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God has not limited salvation for the Jews. He desires salvation for Gentiles too. God has not limited salvation the children of Abraham alone. He planned from the beginning that through a descendant of Abraham "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gn 18:18). It was not merely the family of Israel whom God intended to save, but rather he promised, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gn 12:3).

God has not limited salvation to peasants alone. He desires the salvation of kings as well. God has not limited salvation to those in low positions alone, but he also desires salvation for those in high positions as well.

This is the truth that must be known: God is pleased with all kinds of prayers for all kinds of peoples because he desires to save all kinds of people; people from every class and every station; people from every place and every nation; people from every tribe and tongue, God will save no matter where you're from!

III. Conclusion

Why does Paul urge us to pray?

1. ***Because God is worth spending time with.*** God is worth communing with. Paul urges prayer, not because God needs us, but because we need him. We need his wisdom, his grace, his mercy, his power, his strength. Prayer is the primary means by which our spirit is filled with the sweetness of presence of God. Prayer is the means by which discern God's will and then receive wisdom and strength to go and do it. Prayer is urgent because we urgently need God.
2. ***Because all kinds of people need all kinds of prayer.*** The people around us need help from and communion with God just as much as we do, yet many of them do not know it. Thus, we pray because others don't fully see their own need for God and through prayer God allows us to work with him to accomplish his will in the world. God could fix any and every problem in the world in an instant if it pleased him to do so. But it does not. Rather, he chooses to invite us to join him in putting things right in this world. Prayer is a means of cooperative kingdom building between God and man. Prayer is urgent because there is urgent need in this world.
3. ***Because prayer pleases God.*** It pleases God when his children pray to him. It brings inward delight to the Creator of this universe when his kids dialogue with him about all kinds of

things. Prayer pleases God because it means we trust him with our cares, concerns, and worries. Prayer pleases God because it demonstrates that we know he has all that we need. Prayer manifests his all-sufficiency and our insufficiency. Prayer is urgent because it genuinely pleases God when we pray to him.

4. ***Because people need salvation.*** God could save anyone he wished without the help of any of us, but he has chosen not to do things that way. God has chosen to use means in order to effect salvation. He didn't have to do that way, but this is what he has chosen. The word of God is clear, Faith in God comes by hearing and hearing comes by someone speaking the gospel (Rom 10:17). But if no one speaks the gospel, then no one will believe it and thus, no one will be saved. But if the people of God are a praying people then we will know how to speak and when to speak the gospel and because God has chosen to save people through the proclamation of the gospel, then *some* people are sure to be saved. Pray is urgent because the need for salvation is urgent.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the word 'urge' mean? Why does Paul 'urge' Timothy and the church to prioritize prayer?
2. What are the four different words Paul used to describe prayer? What do each of the different words mean?
3. What does "all people" mean?
4. Who was emperor when Paul wrote this? What does it say?
5. How should we pray for kings and people in high positions?
6. What does it mean to "live a peaceable and quiet life?"
7. What does it mean to "live a godly and dignified life?"
8. What is good and pleasing in God's sight? What does it mean to please God?
9. What are the two desires of God listed in v.4? What do these two facts reveal to you about the nature and character of God?