

There are two take-aways from our passage today... that I hope will shake you up – every bit as much as they did me (over the past few weeks of studying these verses.) ... Let me fire two missals at you (right away) from our passage... and I pray that they will hit their intended target deep inside all of our hearts.

Consider with me (please)... that although God is all-powerful and all-knowing... He has chosen to let us help Him change the world through our prayers. ... How this works is a mystery to us because of our limited understanding... but it is a **reality**... that we will see clearly taught by our passage.

Now... here is the second missal: CHURCH(!) The slow progress of the Gospel... is due to our prayerlessness... more than anything else. The slow progress of the Gospel... in reaching our community... is due to our prayerlessness... more than anything else. The slow progress of the Gospel... in affecting our nation... (and the world)... is due to our prayerlessness... more than anything else. Now you may be thinking that I am overstating the issue. But test whether or not I am... on the basis of the content in our passage today.

In our study of Paul's first letter to Timothy... we have seen how Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to set the church in order. (This context is important in order for us to fully grasp what our passage today is telling us.) ... It seems that there were some elders... who were in authority at this church... who were teaching wrong doctrines. ... Young Timothy was told that he had to confront them. The entire first chapter of Paul's letter to him... was filled with encouragement... to build Timothy's confidence in taking on this fearful and intimidating task.

In chapter one... Paul addressed what is **NOT TO BE DONE** in the church... as he wrote about correcting the elders. In chapter two and three... we are about to see what **IS TO BE DONE** (and how.) ... And Paul does not “beat around the bush. He immediately starts into the most pressing need.

Paul gets down to the “brass tax” of the most important matter that Timothy needed to correct. Chapter two begins with the words “*First of all...*”
“First of all... the church needs to correct its thinking about its role and importance about evangelistic prayer...”

1 Tim 2:1-2

“First of all.” Those aren’t throwaway words. Evangelistic prayer must be the first priority in our private devotions and in our group worship.

Evangelistic praying (apparently) had been neglected in the church. Not only do we get this sense from these verses and what follows... but also because of what Paul has already written in chapter one. The errant elders (it seems) were the reason why evangelistic prayer was neglected. Paul said that they were:

1 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)

⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

These errant teachers were making too much of the law... as though salvation could only be obtained by those who lived by Judaism. (“Salvation is only for those who observe the law.”) This exclusivism would obviously restrict evangelistic praying. So Paul advises Timothy to confront this

problem with the need to pray FOR **ALL** MEN (not just Jews and Jewish converts.) ... As we get further into our passage we will see that Paul has in mind - praying for all men *to be saved*... (in other words... evangelistic praying.)

Ever since the days of Abraham... the Jews misunderstood the reason they were God's people. God wanted to redeem all of mankind through them. But instead they turned inward – and had nothing at all to do with Gentiles. Israel failed to reach out to the world... and Paul was concerned that this same exclusive attitude (that caused Israel to fail her mission)... would now cripple the church.

I propose to you that Paul's concern should be ours – today. We may be in danger of the same sinful neglect. Evangelistic praying (perhaps) is not the priority that Paul displays it needs to be.

As we study today's passage... please evaluate with me... if we are treating *the discipline of evangelistic prayer* as the priority that it needs to be. To help us do that... we are going to follow a five point outline through these verses which will explain evangelistic prayer.

- I. The **Nature** of Evangelistic Prayer
- II. The **Scope** of Evangelistic Prayer
- III. The **Benefit** of Evangelistic Prayer
- IV. The **Reason** for Evangelistic Prayer
- V. The **Attitude** of Evangelistic Prayer

So let's get started with the first one - The **Nature** of Evangelistic Prayer. Please look again at verse 1.

1 Tim 2:1

There are at least seven different Greek nouns for “*prayer*,” and four of them are used here. These four distinct (yet closely related) terms reveal the nature of evangelistic praying.

“Entreaties” is our first word. (δεησις) The word stresses the idea of asking intensely to the point of begging. It’s urgency can be seen by its use in the request of the leper (Luke 5:12)... the demoniac (Luke 8:28, 38)... the father of a possessed child (Luke 9:38, 40)... and the distressed Simon (Acts 8:24).

Evangelistic praying requires a heart that actually cares enough for the unsaved... to urgently plead This earnest attitude was urged by a puritan preacher back in the 1700’s) just before the powerful revival known as “the Great Awakening.” When I first read this... I thought: “*Is it any wonder these people got to experience such a revival...?*” Here is what he preached:

“Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians, let them yearn towards your poor, ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell; how many hundreds of diseases are ready to seize upon them, and if they die unregenerate, they are lost forever. ... have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such cases as this? If you believe not the Word of God, and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? ... If you do believe it, why do you NOT bestir yourself in the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, as long as you be saved? ... Does thou live close by them, or meet them in the streets, or labour with them, or travel with them, or sit and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them; and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fires of hell?”

The nature of evangelistic prayer is a heart that cares and it fervently pleads on behalf of others’ salvation.

The next word that Paul used... that also shows us the nature of evangelistic prayer is the Greek word “ προσευχη .“ This is a more general word for prayer. However... this type of prayer DOES carry a unique element of worship. It focuses on giving God glory in the answer that He gives. So... evangelistic prayer looks ahead... seeing those we pray to be saved... bringing God glory... as they join in worshipping Him. Evangelistic prayer focuses on the Lord abounding in glory all the more... as others come to know Him.

The third word (petition) is “ εντευχιζ “ ... and it means to “get involved with them...” The same word is used in Romans 8:26 to describe what the Holy Spirit does for us... as He intercedes on our behalf. So... evangelistic prayer becomes involved with unsaved people’s struggles of life. It is never detached... cold... or impersonal... It is NOT like a public defender assigned to represent a criminal in a court of law. It cries out to God for their well-being – and ultimately their salvation.

The fourth (and final) word is “thanksgiving” (“ ευχαριστα. “) Evangelistic prayer thanks the Lord that we have a part in bringing the gospel to someone else.

These four words for prayer (in verse 1) demonstrate the nature of evangelistic prayer. So let me put them all together and ask you (now) to examine your own heart.

- Do you fully realize the desperate condition that your lost friends and family members are in?
- Do you really want to see God glorified by the salvation of souls?
- Do you sympathize with the compelling reality of being condemned for eternity?

- Are you thankful that God has given you the mission to evangelize the lost?

If our answer is “no” to any of those questions... then we are indifferent. And CHURCH(!) The slow progress of the Gospel... is due to our evangelistic prayerlessness... more than anything else.

We have seen: I. The **Nature** of Evangelistic Prayer. Now lets look at: II. The **Scope** of Evangelistic Prayer.

1 Tim 2:1b – 2a

There is no place for selfishness – or exclusivity! ... And what this means for the modern-day church... is that we must not keep our prayers too narrowly confined... and centered primarily on our circle of family and friends. We need to expand our prayer lists to those we do not know... and to those **we may not even like**. The scope of evangelistic prayer is for ALL men (in other words... every kind of person.)

Pray for everyone. Not a single person is to be omitted or left out. We are to pray for all persons: ... the high and the low ... the educated and the uneducated ... the important and the unimportant ... the rich and the poor ... the leader and the followers ... the old and the young ... the friend and the enemy.

- Do you pray evangelistically for the leaders of the Gay Rights Movement?
- Do you pray evangelistically for those who upset you as you watch television news broadcasts... or those who upset you at work... or at school?
- Do you pray evangelistically for the producers of the filth that permeates prime-time television?

- Do you pray evangelistically for those who plot America's destruction?

When Paul asks us to pray for all men... this does not mean "everyone who has ever lived." We could never do that; it would be impossible. "All men" (here) means "mankind without distinction." In other words... "all kinds of people.." We are to pray for anyone... including government leaders and politicians.

We live in such a politically charged atmosphere today. There is so much bitterness and animosity. But if we believe the Word of God... neglecting to pray for government leaders and politicians is simply defiance. It is serious sin.

One of the biggest tests of our prayer-life is whether or not we can honestly pray for those who we feel threatened by. But Jesus was quite clear, "Pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

Paul says that Christians are to pray for public officials... and I take it that he meant that the prayers were to be made in the church. To bring this up-to-date... he is saying the Democrats ought to pray for the Republicans... and the Republicans ought to pray for the Democrats.

The thought of praying for evil politicians is shocking to some people. But remember: Nero was on the throne in Rome when Paul charged believers to pray for the king or emperor. And Nero had already burned Rome and had blamed it on Christian believers. In fact... he was presently launching a violent persecution against the believers. ... Not only were Christians denied certain privileges in society; some were even publicly butchered...

burned... or fed to lions. ... But believers were taught to support the government and those in authority - not rebel against it.

Donald Guthrie says, *“This Christian attitude towards the State is of utmost importance. Whether the civil authorities are perverted or not they must be made subjects for prayer, for Christian citizens may in this way influence the course of national affairs, a fact often forgotten except in times of special crisis.*

Matthew Henry wrote, *“Pray for Kings ... though the kings at this time were heathens, enemies to Christianity, and persecutors of Christians ... because it is for the public good that there should be civil government, and proper persons entrusted with the administration of it.*

If we (as a church today) took our admonition here to pray for our leaders more seriously... I have little doubt that we would see a much greater impact on our nation (and world.) ... CHURCH(!) The slow progress of the Gospel... is due to our evangelistic prayerlessness... more than anything else.

From today's passage we have seen: I. The **Nature** of Evangelistic Prayer... and we have seen: II. The **Scope** of Evangelistic Prayer. ... It is time (now) for us to look at: III. The **Benefit** of Evangelistic Prayer.

Paul put it in a two-fold way in verse 2. First... he wrote: *“that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life...”*

Paul's desire for a quiet life does not mean that he simply seeks personal tranquility for Christians. What is sought is the best of conditions for expanding God's kingdom... not simply a peaceful life. (In light of the context) the purpose of this verse is to encourage prayer for an orderly society in which the gospel will be able to reach everyone.

His goal and all-consuming passion... is that the gospel might freely penetrate society... which happens most effectively in a peaceful context.

But it is not only so that the messengers of the gospel may be unhindered. Evangelistic prayer also has an effect on us. ... There is something that is accomplished INSIDE OF US when we pray evangelistically. There is a sense of godliness and dignity that grows.

The Greek word for “godliness” more closely means “*realism*.” “Realism about life” intensifies inside of us. We develop a different consciousness – about everything that is happening around us. We awaken from Satan’s common delusions – and we live realistically. (It has been described as hearing the footsteps of people marching into hell.) ... We understand more realistically what is happening to the masses of people around us... why they act the way they do... and the forces that are at work in society. Compassion replaces anger.

That is why Paul used the second word (which my Bible translates as “dignified.”) This word (“ σέμνοτες ”) has the meaning of: “courteous”... “understanding.” We understand that PEOPLE are not the problem; they are the victims. ... So the effect that evangelistic prayer has on us... is that we become courteous to people... Praying evangelistically will have us pass through life with a graceful dignity. (Graceful dignity is... itself... an attraction to the gospel.)

CHURCH(!) The slow progress of the Gospel... is due to our evangelistic prayerlessness... more than anything else.

Let’s move on (now) to: IV. The Reason for Evangelistic Prayer.

1 Tim 2:3-7

In short... prayer for the lost is the proper thing... because it is good and pleasing in the sight of God. He desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth...

Uh-Oh Pastor... Did you really just say that...? ... Yes... because Scripture said it. But how can this be...? If this is true... if God desires all men to be saved... why doesn't He just save them...? In Hebrews 12:2 the Scripture writer wrote that Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Jesus authors... (He creates) and He perfects faith in us. So... the obvious question is... Why doesn't He simply author and perfect saving faith in everybody? ... If he has the desire and the ability to do it... then why doesn't He...?

And there are FURTHER problems that this verse creates. How can this verse and predestination both be true...? If God desires **all** men to be saved... why does He only predestine a few to be saved... and not the whole human race...?

Should we just rip this verse out of our Bibles...? No!

The easiest way for me to answer (what looks like a problem here)... is for you to go back... and look with me again at the verse that started today's passage. Verse one said:

1 Tim 2:1

Does this verse mean that we are to go to the Deschutes County records office and pray for everyone on record as living in our county... and then go throughout our state (county by county) doing the same thing... and then

every state in our nation... and then the world... so that we don't miss anybody? Is that Paul's meaning of "all men"? ... Of course not! Even IF THAT WERE POSSIBLE (which it isn't.)

Remember... Paul wanted Timothy to confront the exclusive Jewish attitude in the church where Timothy was (which thought that salvation was only to be offered to certain ones.) The exclusive Jewish attitude had no desire (what-so-ever) to offer salvation to those who they did not see were worthy of it. So Paul told Timothy to have the church pray evangelistically for ALL TYPES of people without distinction... (from all walks of life.)

When Paul wrote "all men" in verse 1... that was his meaning. He did not tell us that we had to pray for every single human who has ever walked the face of this earth.

Now just three verses later... Paul is still instructing Timothy on how he is to confront Jewish exclusive attitudes. He is saying: "God's desire – is to save people from every nation on this terrestrial globe." ... The same way that Paul used these words in verse one... is the same way that he used them in verse 4. "All men" or "all persons" means that no ethnic group is excluded. God desires that salvation will include some who are black... yellow... white... red... Jewish... Gentile... free... slave... democrat... or republican.

Watch how this ALSO fits the context of the very next two verses. Paul goes on to write that there is not one gospel for us... and another gospel for the Hotentotts of South Africa. Christ is how we come to God the Father... and it is how the Mongolians in Southeast China come to God as well. Islam... Buddhism... or ancient Indian religions are NOT all equal

ways to God. Therefore we must include them in our evangelistic prayers... because God wants to include many of them... and He will!

1 Tim 2:5-6

If we believe the common lie today... that there are several ways to God... we have no reason to pray evangelistically. We can be satisfied to just let them pursue their own way. (But in doing so... we would allow them to pursue their own way – into Hell.) There are not several paths to God. That is why we must pray evangelistically.

God wants us to pray evangelistically for people – regardless if they seem like “good candidates” for responding to the gospel message or not... regardless if they seem like “our kind of people” or not. ... God is going to save some folks from every walk of life. We don’t know who they are – only God knows – but verse three says that it is pleasing in His sight when we pray evangelistically for people – without knowing who will respond and who will not.

In verse 7... Paul is still striking against Jewish exclusivism by reminding them that He was commissioned by God to take the Gospel to Gentiles all around the Roman Empire. When he says “I am telling the truth; I am not lying” it would appear as though the false teachers were saying that Paul WAS lying about God sending him to give the gospel to the Gentiles.

So far we have seen:

- I. The **Nature** of Evangelistic Prayer
- II. The **Scope** of Evangelistic Prayer
- III. The **Benefit** of Evangelistic Prayer
- IV. The **Reason** for Evangelistic Prayer

...and this leaves us with just one more. ... V. The **Attitude** of Evangelistic Prayer.

1 Tim 2:8

I hope by now God has been convicting you that: The slow progress of the Gospel... is due to our evangelistic prayerlessness... more than anything else. And if God has been convicting you... then you are probably ready for the “*How do we do this*” that we see in this verse.

Having urged Timothy to make prayer his top priority in ministry... Paul explained how it should be implemented church-wide. He wanted people “*in every place*” to pray. He didn’t want them to construct a special building. He didn’t want them to consecrate a sacred spot. He didn’t want them to reserve a special time. He didn’t want them to gather in only one place. There’s nothing wrong with those things... but Paul didn’t want anything to become a distraction to the top priority: ongoing, coordinated, congregation-wide prayer for the salvation and well-being of every sort of person. ... D. L. Moody is quoted as saying, “*Satan will do anything to keep you from praying, even if it means adjusting a window shade.*”

Evangelistic praying demands that I be in a right relationship with God (“holy hands”) and with my fellow believers (“without anger and quarreling”). Mouthing all the right words – while holding onto unresolved conflict – is the wrong way to pray evangelistically. Our goal needs to be in right relationship with God and with others... so that we can pray evangelistically.

If God has been speaking to you today... calling you to the priority of evangelistic prayer... then I am going to ask you to re-dedicate your life to

this discipline. Start by driving through your neighborhood and praying for those who live near you. Begin praying for people that you see every day in your normal course of life. Pray for your grocery checker. I sometimes tell them that I am doing that and then ask them if there is something specific I can be praying for. You don't even have to know them. Pray for people who upset you – as you read the news and watch television. And yes... pray for our government leaders.