

Living in God's Church Today

A Global Concern in Public Worship

1 Timothy 2:1-7

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Scripture

In his First Letter to Timothy, Paul wanted to give instructions through him about living in God's church. He began with *doctrine* in chapter 1 by urging Timothy to charge certain persons not to teach false doctrine. Timothy was also to remain loyal to the apostolic faith.

In chapter 2, Paul started a new section. His teaching in chapter 2 was on *public worship*. The first part of chapter 2 (vv. 1-7) emphasized the need for a global concern in public worship, and the second part of the chapter (vv. 8-15) addressed the respective roles of men and women in public worship. What was important when Paul wrote this letter is just as important for us now as we live in God's church today.

Let us read about a global concern in public worship in 1 Timothy 2:1-7:

¹First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. ⁷For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-7)

Introduction

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur stood a lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea and with no thought for themselves went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost. Many of those who were rescued and also others from the surrounding area wished to become associated with the station and to give their time, money, and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The lifesaving station grew.

In time some of the crew became concerned that the station was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more commodious place should be provided as the first refuge of those snatched from the sea. The emergency cots were replaced with beds, and better furniture was purchased for the enlarged building. The station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely. Fewer members were now interested in leaving the plush station to go to sea on lifesaving missions. So they hired surrogates to do that work. However, they retained the lifesaving motif in the club's decorations, and a ceremonial lifeboat lay in the room where club initiations were held.

One dark stormy night a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick and obviously from distant shores. The station was in chaos. The event was so traumatic that the people contracted for outbuildings to be constructed so future shipwrecks could be processed with less disruption.

Eventually a rift developed in the station. Most of the members wanted to discontinue the station's lifesaving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to their normal social

life. Some insisted, however, that rescue was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But the latter were ignored and told that if they wanted to keep lifesaving as their primary purpose, they could begin their own station down the coast, which they did. Over time those individuals fell prey to the same temptations as the first group, coming to care more about comforting one another than rescuing the perishing. After a while a few, remembering their real purpose, split off to establish yet another lifesaving station. And on and on it went. Today if you visit that seacoast, you will find a number of impressive lifesaving stations along the shore. Sadly, shipwrecks still occur in those waters, but most people are lost.¹

I first heard the parable of “The Life-Saving Station” from Dr. Robert Coleman, one of my seminary professors. Recently, I came across it again in Kent Hughes’ commentary on Paul’s First Letter to Timothy.

Paul’s great concern was that God’s people would lose their focus on the gospel. He wanted God’s people to live on mission with the message of the gospel in the worship of God. John Stott puts it this way:

It is often said that the church’s priority task is evangelism. But this is really not so. Worship takes precedence over evangelism, partly because love for God is the first commandment and love for neighbor the second, partly because, long after the church’s evangelistic task has been completed, God’s people will continue to worship him eternally, and partly because evangelism is itself an aspect of worship, a “priestly service” in which converts “become an offering acceptable to

¹ Adapted from “The Life-Saving Station” by Theodore Wedel in R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 56–58.

God.”²

What stands out in the beginning of chapter 2 is the universal aspect of the church’s responsibility. The word “all” occurs 5 times in verses 1-7. Contrary to the false teachers, salvation was not restricted to an elite few but Paul stressed that God’s plan and our responsibility concerned “all people.”

Lesson

1 Timothy 2:1-7 teaches us the importance of having a global concern in public worship as we live in God’s church today.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. Our Prayers Must Be for All People (2:1-2)
2. God’s Desire Is for All People (2:3-4)
3. Christ’s Ransom Is for All People (2:5-6)
4. Our Proclamation Is for All People (2:7)

I. Our Prayers Must Be for All People (2:1-2)

First, to have a global concern in public worship as we live in God’s church today, our prayers must be for all people.

Paul wrote in verse 1, **“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.”** Apparently, prayer was no longer a priority for the believers in Ephesus. So Paul urged Timothy to make prayer a priority again. The false teachers had likely focused so much on “myths and endless genealogies” (1:4) that they did not teach the necessity of prayer. After all, if salvation

² John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 59.

was limited to those who were born into the right family, then there was no hope for others and no need to pray for them. Paul told Timothy to correct this error and make prayer a priority once again in the life of the church.

The Greek word for **“supplications”** (*deesis*) occurs 21 times in the New Testament, and it means “an earnest or urgent request (to God).” The Greek word for **“prayers”** (*proseuche*) occurs 38 times in the New Testament, and here it means “a request made to a deity.” The Greek word for **“intercessions”** (*enteuxis*) occurs only 2 times in the New Testament, and it means “a formal message requesting something that is submitted to a king (or authority); usually designating petitions made to God as King.” And finally, the Greek word for **“thanksgivings”** (*eucharistia*) occurs 15 times in the New Testament, and it means “the act of expressing gratitude or showing appreciation to someone.” Paul’s point in using these various terms was to call for all sorts of prayer to be made for all kinds of people.

Paul went on to write that prayers **“be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions”** (2:1b-2a). Paul urged that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for **“all people.”** Paul meant that prayers should be made for all groups or classes of people. It would not be possible to pray for each person in the world. Rather, Paul wanted prayers to be made for all groups of people such as **“kings”** (and their subjects) and those who are in **“high positions.”** At that time, Christians were seen as a sect and so praying for their rulers would be seen positively rather than negatively by the authorities.

The focus of the believers’ prayers for their leaders was **“that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way”** (2:2b). Paul wanted prayer offered for

authorities so that the believers would be able to live peaceful and quiet lives that would allow them to conduct themselves in a godly and dignified way.

We need to be reminded of this truth today. When Paul wrote this letter, Nero was the Emperor. He was a ruthless, despotic dictator. The political leader of the people of Ephesus was not from either the same or from a different political party. And yet, Paul said that when God's people gathered in public worship, they were to pray for **“all people.”**

John Stott points out that our prayers must be expansive and universal. Our prayers must be for all people. He writes:

Some years ago I attended public worship in a certain church. The pastor was absent on holiday, and a lay elder led the pastoral prayer. He prayed that the pastor might enjoy a good vacation (which was fine), and that two lady members of the congregation might be healed (which was also fine; we should pray for the sick). But that was all. The intercession can hardly have lasted thirty seconds. I came away saddened, sensing that this church worshipped a little village god of their own devising. There was no recognition of the needs of the world, and no attempt to embrace the world in prayer.³

So, let our prayers be for all people.

II. God's Desire Is for All People (2:3-4)

Second, to have a global concern in public worship as we live in God's church today, God's desire is for all people.

Having just urged all kinds of prayer for all kinds of people, Paul wrote in verse 3, **“This is good, and it is pleasing**

³ John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, 61.

in the sight of God our Savior.” Paul wanted Timothy to teach believers to pray for all kinds of people because it is good to pray in this manner. Moreover, praying expansively pleases God. Paul wrote, **“God our Savior”** by which he meant that believers are the ones who are to pray.

Paul then wrote in verse 4 that God our Savior **“desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** The Greek word for **“desires”** (*thelo*) means “to feel or have a desire for; want strongly.” The word used here is not the word that normally expresses God’s will of decree (his eternal purpose) but rather his will of desire. Paul did not mean that God wishes for all people to be saved but is unable to accomplish his purpose since not all people are saved. It is likely that Paul used the expression **“all people”** to take issue with the false teachers who were teaching that God willed the salvation of only Jewish people, or the Gnostic teaching that salvation belonged only to the spiritually elite. Instead, Paul wanted to make clear that God wants all kinds of people to be saved. This is similar to his statement in verse 1 about prayers being made for all kinds of people.

The gospel saves all kinds of people. There are people from all kinds of people groups who have been and are being saved. There is still more work to do as there are still many people groups who have not yet heard the good news of the gospel. Since God’s desire is for all kinds of people to be saved, our task is to take the good news of the gospel to all people.

III. Christ’s Ransom Is for All People (2:5-6)

Third, to have a global concern in public worship as we live in God’s church today, Christ’s ransom is for all people.

Paul wrote in verse 5, **“For there is one God, and there**

is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Paul made clear that there is only one **“mediator”** between God and men. That mediator is **Christ Jesus**. The Greek word for **“mediator”** (*mesites*) occurs 6 times in the New Testament, and it refers to “a negotiator who acts as a link between parties; sometimes specifically selected.” Jesus is the intermediary. The two parties are God, who has been offended, and people, whose sins offend God. Since Jesus is fully God and fully man, he can properly represent each to the other. He is the perfect intermediary to reconcile two opposing parties and bring about peace.

Many years ago, I was asked to mediate between two groups. One group had left their former church, which was in another denomination. The group that had left wanted to start a new church in our denomination. At the appointed time, several leaders from the other denomination and the local church met with the departing group, and I was to be there to facilitate some sort of mediation. The mediation did not go well because I was a member of the denomination with which the departing group wanted to affiliate. I was seen to be biased and not favorable to the other denomination. Though I tried to be impartial, there was undoubtedly some truth to the allegation. This incident was a wonderful illustration to me of how perfect Jesus is as a mediator between God and men. As I mentioned above, since Jesus is fully God and fully man, he can properly represent each to the other. He is the perfect intermediary to reconcile two opposing parties and bring about peace.

Paul wrote of Christ Jesus in verse 6, **“who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”** Jesus fulfilled the office of a mediator by giving himself as a ransom. The Greek word for **“ransom”** (*antilytron*) is used only here in the New Testament, and it means “what is

given in exchange (as payment) for the release of someone held captive.” Jesus gave himself by his death to release his people from their sins. This act of giving was itself a testimony that was given at the right time. Paul intended for the **“testimony”** to give further proof or evidence that God will save his people.

Several months ago, 17 short-term missionaries were taken hostage by a gang in Haiti. The gang demanded a ransom of \$1 million per person. After some time, a few of the missionaries were released. It was reported that an unnamed source had paid ransom money. As I recall, there were also reports that ransom money was being paid to release all the missionaries. Then, two months after their capture, the remaining missionaries made a daring escape in the night. Thankfully, all the missionaries were able to get away from the gang safely. One difficulty with paying ransom money to kidnappers and hostage-takers is that it emboldens them and others to continue taking people and holding them for ransom. One of the glorious truths of the gospel is that Jesus paid the ransom in full. The ransom for every elect child of God has been fully paid and no further payment can ever be demanded.

IV. Our Proclamation Is for All People (2:7)

Finally, to have a global concern in public worship as we live in God's church today, our proclamation is for all people.

Paul wrote in verse 7, **“For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”** God appointed Paul to be a preacher and an apostle for the purpose of bearing testimony to all people. The Greek word for **“preacher”** (*keryx*) occurs 3 times in the New Testament, and

it means “a person who proclaims important news publicly; especially the news proceeding from God concerning the way of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus.” In ancient times, a **“preacher”** was sent out by the king to shout some important news to the people. He usually did so in public places so that many people could hear the good news. Paul adopted the language to himself as he was being sent by the King of Kings to proclaim salvation for sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Paul also said that he was a **“teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”** The Greek word for **“teacher”** (*didaskalos*) occurs 59 times in the New Testament, and it means “a person who instructs others by imparting skills or knowledge.” Paul believed that he was called to a ministry of evangelism and teaching to **the Gentiles**, that is, to all people who were not yet part of God’s covenant family.

Pastors today are not apostles. But they still are called to a ministry of preaching and teaching. They proclaim the good news that salvation is available to sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And they teach people all the glorious truths that are contained in God’s word. May God raise a mighty army of pastors who are faithful in their preaching and teaching the good news of the gospel.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed 1 Timothy 2:1-7, let us embrace a global concern in our public worship.

Let our worship services have a global concern as we pray for all people, affirm God’s desire for all people to be saved, believe Christ’s ransom for all, and that the gospel proclamation is for all people. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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