

3) LESSONS FROM 1. EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

Chapter 2:1-8

I.

Introduction

1. Epistle to Timothy is a letter of practical instructions for Christians. In 1. Timothy 1 Paul gave instructions to Timothy how to deal with the problem caused by the teachers of different (unsound) doctrines in Ephesus. Now in 1. Timothy 2 Paul gives instructions to Timothy for the Christians in Ephesus regarding praying.

II.

Chapter 2:1-8

Why to pray for all men, rulers and people in authority?

1Ti 2:1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men,

2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

3 This is good, and it is 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 there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time.

7 For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

In chapter 2 Paul focused his attention on another problem that had to be worked on in the church (churches) in Ephesus. Let's notice here again an indication of urgency on the part of Paul. He urged Timothy that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for certain people for certain reasons that we will consider later.

Prayer is the only way of communication that we as Christians have with our heavenly Father. All we wish to tell Him or request of Him, we can tell or request only through prayers. God knows it and in the Scriptures He gives us repeatedly instructions regarding praying.

The most famous and known to people is the model prayer by which Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples how to pray:

Mt 6:9 ¶ Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread;

12 And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors;

13 And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

When we think about it, Jesus here taught that in order that we pray properly to God: we must recognize God in heaven as our Holy Father, our Creator, we must recognize His saving will of kingdom and our obligation to abide in it, we must recognize our physical and spiritual needs and ask Him to supply them,

we must recognize our responsibility to forgive those who sin against us, we must recognize that God is the only one who can help us to resist temptation and deliver us from evil.

This prayer is about our personal relationship to God. It is about making Him God of our life upon whom we depend in all things.

However there are some other instructions in the Scriptures regarding praying that deal with different things. Let's look at some examples:

Instructions who to pray for

A] Pray for ourselves and other Christians for number of reasons:

a] for relief from suffering:

Jas 5:13 Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise.

b] for overcoming sickness:

Jas 5:14 Is any 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;

c] for forgiveness of sins:

Jas 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

d] for resisting temptation:

Mt 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

e] for doing that which is right:

2Co 13:7 ¶ But we pray God that you may not do wrong--not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed.

f] for knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding:

Col 1:9 ¶ And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

g] for well-being:

3Jo 1:2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health; I know that it is well with your soul.

B] Pray for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions:

1Ti 2:1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men,

2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

C] Pray for our enemies:

Mt 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Instructions on internal conditions for praying

a) Pray with our mind and spirit:

1Co 14:15 ¶ What am I to do? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

b) Pray in harmony with Holy Spirit:

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit;

c) Pray with pure heart:

1Ti 2:8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

d) Pray without hypocrisy:

Mt 6:5 ¶ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

Mt 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

e) Pray without self-righteous attitude:

Lu 18:10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

Instructions how often to pray

Pray at all times:

Eph 6:18 Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

The above principles would cover both, private and public prayers that are part of public worship of God.

Evaluation of instructions on praying

It is evident that there is not one universal prayer for everything, but different prayers that address different needs and have different purposes. As we have read, the purpose of prayers for all men, particularly for kings and people in high positions was that Christians may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. Did not God know that Christians in Ephesus had a need of quiet and peaceable life? Yes He knew it. The question is if Christians in Ephesus were fully aware that God could help them in this area had they prayed to Him for all men, kings and people in high positions. We need to realize that Ephesus was a center of pagan worship of goddess Artemis. Her temple was among seven wonders of ancient world. There were people in Ephesus who felt very strongly about the cult and whose living depended on the cult (e.g. silversmith Demetrius from Acts 19). They were ready to fight for the cause of their goddess. They had people in high positions, or authorities on their side. It was a hostile environment for followers of Jesus Christ that could have possibly great impact on their lives.

Different needs have different priorities that determine priorities of prayers, but there is one universal need that every person has and that is to be saved. This universal need of salvation

corresponds to our duty to make disciples for Jesus. Hostile environment toward Christians and Christianity caused by adversaries of Jesus from among the men and people in authority, will not help to promote message of salvation to the lost. Such hostile environment will not help Christians to perform another important duty and that is to live life that is godly and respectful in every way. Therefore, Christians need to pray for all men, particularly kings and people in high positions on the first place.

Although I have been using the word prayer, God distinguishes four different types of prayers: supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings. Supplication is petition to God to supply needs of us and/or others. Prayer expresses our devotion to God. Intercession is asking God on behalf of someone else. Thanksgiving is giving thanks to God for His grace and His blessings.

All these types of prayers were to be made for all men, particularly kings and people in high positions who have greater responsibility and influence than ordinary citizens, that Christians in Ephesus could lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

Such prayer is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, because He desires all men, including kings and people in high positions to know the truth and be saved. And the truth is that there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time (by His resurrection from the dead, His appearance to eye witnesses and their witness of the fact to other people). This is also why Paul was appointed a preacher and apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

This is what Timothy needed to focus on next (beside dealing with teachers of different doctrines) in his work with church (churches) in Ephesus, in order that Christians would understand what is God's will regarding praying so that their prayers would be acceptable for God and their public worship would be pleasing God. (Verse 8 indicates that there were more than one Christian churches in Ephesus, which would make Timothy's task even more difficult.)

Thus when Christians in church in Ephesus prayed on the first place for all men, including kings and people in high positions, God answered their prayer and they could lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way, it would give them opportunities to manifest the truth about salvation to these people, whether in word or deed of agape love and possibly bring at least some of them to the true God through Jesus Christ.

What is the lesson for us? First of all prayer is an important part of our public worship of God. Our supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings are to be on the first place made for all men, especially for rulers and those in authority who have greatest influence on our lives and have power to make our life peaceful and power to make our life troublesome. We need to pray for their well-being, especially that their hearts would turn to God and we can have peace to perform our duties to God, teach gospel for salvation of lost and live godly and honest life. Thus it is in our interest to pray for them.

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