

INTRO:

Alright friends, come on back...Hope that gave you a chance to connect. AND that of course you'll continue that connection within a Missional Family Meeting, since as we say, while THIS time is a kind of "*family-style worship time for those hungry to find freedom and rest,*" Missional Family Meetings are REALLY where we're able to "*connect around the good news of Jesus and help others do the same!*"...Parents, if you haven't already, feel free to dismiss your kids with **Claudia** so that we can dig into the Scriptures together - (PAUSE) - So in my preparation for today, I ran across this quote by an old South African theologian named Andrew Murray. He said this; "*The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray WILL make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history.*"¹ I've read that multiple times this week. And each time I do something stirs in me: As crazy as this might sound, I really believe God wants to use me/use you/use us to impact the spread of the Gospel BY simply becoming a praying people!...Here's why I believe that: **1 Timothy 2:1-6!**...So if you have a Bible or Bible App and I hope you do, make sure you're looking at **1 Timothy 2:1-6** - a passage written as a part of a letter from the Apostle Paul to his young/fellow Pastor Timothy, charging him to deal with false teaching that had arisen in the church BY showing the church that, when believed, the Gospel always produces real change in our lives.² One of those changes being that we become **a praying people**/see that prayer is really "*the main task of the church and those of us in it.*" Prayer!...So let's follow along as we hear the reading of God's word from **1 Timothy 2:1-6**...**Ezri** reads...

TEXT:

Thank you **Ezri**...Could we thank both God AND **Ezri** for the reading of His word!...D. A. Carson, who's long-been, one of my favorite commentators, says that if you really wanna embarrass the average Christian/and I don't, but he says, if you did: just ask em to tell you about their prayer life. Cuz let's be honest, prayer is often something most of us are woefully deficient in! There was even a survey taken in a prominent seminary among students training to be Missionaries, Pastors and Church Planters, which revealed that only 6%/ 6%! could honestly admit to spending regular time in the Scriptures and prayer.³ And these are your "professional" Christians right?, which by way of aside, is why when anyone asks me about my education, I always hesitate to tell em that I have what's called a Master of Divinity, BOTH because that's like the stupidest name for a degree, since you know God's up there going, "*Oh that's so cute/you mastering me...Precious.*" But ALSO cuz I know those stats/I know that the prayer life of most people/even many Pastors would be painfully embarrassing to admit. And YET, the argument Paul's making in the passage you just heard read is that really prayer is "*the main task of the church and those of us in it.*" And here's why: 3 things, if you're taking notes he give us about prayer. **First, A Call To It; Second, The Goal Of It; And Third, The Motive For It.**

So **First, The Call To It:** Notice in **v.1** Paul says, "*FIRST of all then, I URGE that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.*" Now to be sure, there has

¹ Cited in "Acts 12.1-19 - Earnest Prayer" - J.D. Greear

² Context, Purpose and Occasion of 1 Timothy adapted from ESV+

³ Carson, Call for Spiritual Reformation, 16-7: Cited in "Earnest Prayer and Opened Prison Doors" // Acts 12:1-17 // SENT #16 by J.D. Greear

been no shortage of ink spilled parsing through those 4 different terms for prayer there. Personally, I appreciate the way the New American Commentary differentiates em, saying that “*supplications*” are usually prayers based out of a deep sense of spiritual need; while “*prayers*” is simply the common word in the NT for communication with God. “*Intercession*” tends to highlight confidence in God by the person praying, and “*thanksgiving*” underscores the posture we oughta have IN praying...And that’s all true. You can make those distinctions. But the reality is, Paul’s point here isn’t so much TO make those distinctions as it is to simply pile up different references to prayer. In other words, he’s not so much making a distinction between TYPES of prayer, but rather collecting synonyms FOR prayer in order to communicate...the importance OF prayer. The repetition here is for effect!⁴ It’s Paul basically saying, “*it doesn’t matter how or when or where ya pray...Just pray!*” Like, the **Call to Prayer** is nothing more and nothing less than, as the great theologians over at Nike would say, “*Just Do It!*”...***So excuses, objections, barriers aside: Are you doing it? Is your relationship with God marked by prayer?***

And here’s why that’s so important: Because **Second**, there’s a specific **Goal to Prayer**; namely, the salvation of people! People’s salvation is what’s at stake in your praying! Cuz look in **vv.2-4** Paul says, “*(pray) for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. THIS is good* - and the “*this*” there is in reference not to “*leading a peaceful/quiet life*” but to the praying.⁵ So he’s saying, “*praying is good,*” AND he says, “*pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires ALL people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” - not that all WILL be saved. The fact that God DESIRES the salvation of all doesn’t guarantee that all will be saved/we’re not universalists. God is not one to, as one commentator says, “*override the reluctance of people bent on pursuing their own way...His will is not a bulldozer crushing and forcing into obedience any who resist it.*” No! While God does try woo you into repentance with His goodness, He doesn’t force Himself upon you.⁶ Just look at the Cross of Christ to see that...BUT God does desire that ALL be saved, which is WHY, as Paul says, it pleases God when we earnestly pray for the salvation OF all; meaning pray for all groups of people without distinction of race, nationality, or social position⁷; INCLUDING, as he mentions here, “*kings and (those) in high positions.*” In other words, our enemies/or at the very least, those frustrating-thorn-in-our-side folks we all have, since at the time in which Paul’s writing here, that’s what so many “*kings and people in high positions*” were - enemies of Christ/people using power and influence to thwart the ability of Christians to live “*godly*” lives. So we’re to pray for EVERYONE he’s saying, including those...we don’t wanna pray for, BECAUSE it not only pleases God/which right there oughta be incentive enough, BUT get this: your prayers are actually instrumental in God saving people. (MIND BLOWN)...***Let me explain:*** On the one hand, we see in this text, not only that God saves, but that He desires all people TO BE saved right? But then on the other, we’re told to pray for people’s salvation. So the question often gets asked then: “*If God’s the one who saves and*

⁴ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 84–86.

⁵ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 88.

⁶ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 89.

⁷ Insight of “all” from Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 89.

God desires all to BE saved, why do I need to pray?” Or conversely, *“if IN praying we somehow have the ability to PUSH God to save; ya know cuz we prayed the right thing/in the right way, then doesn’t that mean God’s not really God?”* **See the dilemma?** And historically theologians have tended to fall into one of two camps on this; the/what’s called more “reformed” camp, which highlights the sovereignty and immutability of God BUT can risk downplaying personal responsibility...OR the more “charismatic”/maybe “Arminian” camp, which highlights personal responsibility, BUT can downplay God’s sovereignty/make Him out to be someone we can, in effect, manipulate by simply naming-and-claiming things in prayer...And just to put my theological cards on the table for ya, I’ll tell ya: The whole thing gives me an ice cream headache...Because here’s the thing: According to the Scriptures, faith is not being able to reconcile every theological conundrum. Faith is being able to hold in tension what you DO know with what you don’t/even IF that’s exceedingly frustrating for us A-type folks...And what we do know is that we can’t be so “reformed” that we limit the work of the Spirit through our prayers. But NEITHER can we be so spiritual/charismatic, that we in any way lessen God’s sovereignty...Which incidentally, is why I tell people when they ask, that as a church; we’re BOTH charismatic...but with a seatbelt AND reformed...but with a booster seat! Cuz at the end of the day, the Scriptures are clear that God’s purposes are unchanging/His ability and DESIRE to save all is unshakable. The measure of that is of course the Cross and Resurrection. BUT they’re also clear that our prayers are instrumental. Jesus’ life and ministry show that! And so when you’re asking questions like, *“should I even pray, what’s the point of prayer?”*, frankly, you’re asking the wrong questions. The 19th century Princeton theologian A.A. Hodge put it well (and I’m paraphrasing). He said, *“It’s like asking, ‘Does God know the day you’ll die?’* Yeah! He’s God right?... *‘Ok then, Has God appointed that day?’* Yes! He’s numbered all of our days... *‘Can you do anything then to change that day?’* No!... *‘So why do we eat?’* To live! *‘What happens if you don’t eat?’* You die! *‘Then if you don’t eat, and then die, would that be the day that God appointed for you to die?’*...And I’ll say this as pastorally as I can, *“stop asking stupid questions and just eat.”* Eating is the pre-ordained way God has appointed for living...I imagine AA Hodge saying something like that to us today: *“Quit asking stupid questions and just pray,”* BECAUSE prayer is God’s pre-ordained way by which people come to *“be saved and to the knowledge of the truth!”*⁸ THAT’S it’s so critical that we heed the Call to pray. Salvation is at stake! ***Where would you be if it not for the prayers of those who know and love you?***

Which brings me to Paul’s ***Final Point: The Motive For Prayer!*** Cuz let’s be honest, all of us can proly admit we’re deficient in prayer right? But apart from just white-knuckling it and telling ourselves, *“I’m gonna be better at praying,”* which never works/at least not long-term, where do we find real motivation to become this praying people?...Well, look in ***vv.5-6***, because there Paul essentially presents ***the Gospel in the form of 3 facts***⁹, which **TOGETHER remind us that the most loving thing we can do and be about: is prayer.** ***First***, he says, ***v.5***, there’s **“One God.”** Now, that’s not some prideful claim by an exclusivist Jew. No this is an affirmation that IN their being only one God - so not *“your God and my God,”* or *“your truth and my truth,”*

⁸ Insights used for explanation here adapted from: <https://jdgrear.com/prayer-change-gods-mind/> + “The Sovereignty of God and Prayer” by John Piper + “The Blessings of God Are Released Through Persistent Prayer” from by Pastor J.D.

⁹ Insight on facts: Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 90-91.

or even, “*God’s like a mountain with many paths to Him,*” but “*One God,*” it MEANS then, that He’s the point of everything/the reason why any of us are here. The One who made you with dignity, value and beauty. The One who knows best for you. The One who fills your life with goodness. The One for whom you’re created and TO whom you owe your allegiance. AND the One you spurn when you choose NOT to trust and rest in Him. See, if there’s One God it means, our lives really only begin to make sense when we START with and make life about God...I’ve shared this with you before, but years ago, the girls and I were visiting family. And one of the things my mom always does when we’re in-town is arrange a family picture. And to be honest there’s always a little pressure to, like, take a good a shot, cuz she uses it for every family card for the year. So we do it and we’re check’n out the options for which one is best. And I’ll tell you, it was like the Lord spoke to me. Cuz after a few minutes, I realized: all the options I’d been thinking were best had one small thing in common: I looked good in em. But I kid-you-not, in some of em one daughter’s crying, another’s looking the wrong way, the other’s picking her nose. I even picked one in which Abby’s back was completely turned to the camera, but I’m like “*oh yeah that’s the one.*”...And I realized, not only was I starting with and making the whole thing about me, but this is what we do with God. And WHEN we do, it breaks everything...If there’s “*one God,*” our lives only make sense when we START with and center them ON God. ***So consequently, praying for people to know, be saved by, and make their life about God is to lovingly care that they not miss out on what their life’s purpose is!...God!***

But ***Second***, there’s also, as Paul says, **One Mediator** “*between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” And obviously, He’s referring to that fact that BECAUSE we’ve chosen NOT to make God the center of our lives, we’ve necessarily severed relationship with Him. And if you’ve ever watched Law and Order or something, you know that when relationship has been irreparably severed, what you have to have right is, a qualified mediator! Someone to act as the go-between to bring you back into relationship...Paul’s reminding us that JESUS, as the “*Christ-man*” IS our qualified mediator, because as “*man*” He can represent US to God. But as “*the Christ;*” literally “*the anointed one,*”¹⁰ He can represent GOD to us!...No one else can do that, which is WHY saying Jesus is just a good example or one way to God cuz all religions are the same, is not only against the clear testimony of Scripture; it’s illogical! Jesus IS our ***One Mediator.*** ***And so consequently, praying for people to be saved by His mediatorial work is to care that they be reconnected to God and enjoy God’s blessing forever! One Mediator!***

And then ***Finally, One Payment!*** Or as Paul says in v.6, one “*who gave himself as a ransom for all...*” ***You know what a ransom is?*** It’s a negotiated deal BY a mediator. When Jesus, went to the cross, He effectively negotiated a deal so that you and I could be brought back into God’s presence. But here’s the difference: HIS ransom wasn’t paid with money or even a promise, cuz ya know in the movies, there’s always that scene where the side paying the ransom says, “*I want proof of life*” before payment. Jesus understood, there WAS no proof of life. You and I were, as ***Romans*** says, “*dead in our trespasses and sins.*” And YET Jesus didn’t just still pay, He paid with HIS life! In dying on the Cross in your place, Jesus paid off the righteous requirement of

¹⁰ <https://www.bibleinfo.com/en/questions/what-does-christ-mean>

your sin against a holy God SO THAT you can now be brought back into God's love and grace forever...AND when Paul says He did it by "*giving himself*," He's reminding us that Jesus died for you/me/everyone...voluntarily! So that now, you understand, it doesn't matter who you are or what you've done, salvation is there for the taking. No other payment required. The ransom's been paid. No other religious or moral efforts needed on your part! Nothing "to be continued." Every need met in Jesus Christ crucified, so that God can now love you the way you are, NOT the way you should be! ***And so you see, praying for people to know and be saved by Jesus' ransom/His what's called "substitutionary atonement," is to care that they have their deepest needs of love, acceptance and happiness met!***

CONCLUSION:

And so ya see Friend, when you understand that there's ***One God, One Mediator, One Payment...Already Made***, BECAUSE that One God, not only desires ***All To Be Saved***, but ***Invites*** you to receive Him if you haven't, and then be a part of helping others receive Him through prayer; it literally transforms prayer from something mundane...to a joy! It inspires you to live a life OF prayer. As Tim Keller's said THIS is what gives our prayer light and heat - fills it with truth and passion/makes it FIRE!...***So again let me ask***: Tell me about your prayer life:

- ***Do you have a time of day when, even just for 5 min. you pray that God would bring salvation to those around you?*** And take it from me: This is something the Lord has had to work into me. I've never been a morning guy. My roommates in college used to hate me, cuz if there was an Olympic competition for how many times a person could press snooze, I was a gold medalist. And that only got worse once I had kids. But just in the last couple years, the Lord has helped me develop an almost daily rhythm of being up at 5:15 to pray for you, my neighbors, our city - and not cuz I found some new trick, or alarm clock, or even cuz I told myself I was gonna be better at it, but because God has graciously WORKED into me an understanding that He wants to do INCREDIBLE things if only I'll get UP to then get DOWN on my knees...What's that look like for you?
- ***Or how about in your Missional Family Meetings?*** Is prayer a main course OF those meetings. And not just, "*Oh yeah I'll pray for your job or your grandma's health.*" That's fine! But I mean, praying for specific friends, neighbors, co-workers to come TO Christ and be saved! Praying for each other to be being saved and grow IN Christ. THAT kind of prayer!
- ***Or lastly, how bout as a whole church?*** Do you prioritize the times when we gather JUST to pray - ***Tuesday evenings on Zoom, Last Monday of the Month around the neighborhood, Sunday mornings before these Gathering.*** And I know it's not always convenient. But honestly, there's never gonna be a time that's convenient for everyone...And at the end of the day/as Jim Cymbala said, "*attendance at a gathering like this or even another church event often shows how popular the pastor or a certain group of people are. But attendance at a prayer time? That shows how popular Jesus is!*"...Church, this needs to be us! And to be sure, I do not think I've led you well in this. I'm gonna keep trying, but really, as J.D. Greear said, "*nothing can replace you becoming a person OF prayer!*¹¹...***Let's Pray...***

¹¹ Cymbala and Greear quotes in "Earnest Prayer and Opened Prison Doors" // Acts 12:1-17 // SENT #16 - J.D. Greear