

## IT'S TIME TO PRAY!

### 1 Timothy 2:1-8

When Dr. Paul Cedar became President of the EFCA, his first challenge to our churches was a call to prayer.

If you were around the Free church six years ago, you would have become familiar with the call: ***"It's Time to Pray!"***

During the past 6 years, that call has become a major theme throughout the EFCA.

Bob Bakke was named to a new position as National Prayer Coordinator.

We have assumed a key role in promoting the National Prayer Accord and the National Day of Prayer each May.

Unfortunately, in spite of that focus, many of us haven't gotten the point.

We have become like the church that became upset when a raunchy nightclub was built next door. People started to pray. Amazingly, the nightclub's business dwindled and they had to close. This wasn't all good; the owner sued, accusing them of ruining his business. Attorneys for the church argued there was no way their prayers could have caused the poor performance of the club. The judge agreed. He ruled in favor of the church, saying, "While the nightclub owner believes in the power of prayer, the people of the church do not."

Lest we be too harsh on modern Christians, Timothy went through a similar experience in the 1st century.

A large part of Timothy looks at issues we already addressed in Titus, or personal issues Paul addresses with Timothy.

Paul gives Timothy instructions ] **Concerning worship 2:1-15**

**The role of prayer 2:1-8** Dedication to prayer should be given top priority.

*Paul's words to Timothy in the 1st century are timely for our church also.*

## **THE PURPOSE OF PROPER PRAYING 2:1-4**

We are to pray for everyone, especially our rulers, so we will be free to live as God wants us to live and others will hear the truth and be saved.

### **CALL to prayer 2:1**

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—*

Paul uses four synonyms for prayer, probably *NOT* because he wants to give special emphasis to each kind of prayer.

It seems he is “piling up” these words to underline *the importance of prayer*.

We should dedicate ourselves to *all kinds* of praying. Paul specifically mentions

**Requests/entreaties** — to ask for what you *need* — need-based praying

**Prayers** — general word for prayer

Intercession/petitions — to meet with and converse with someone > to get together to talk to someone, as you would arrange a meeting with a landlord or employer to talk about something you need done.

**Thanksgiving** — always a critical element of prayer — the response of faith.

Since we know we can trust God with issues we ask for, we ask with grateful hearts for whatever He may do in response to our request.

God's people should dedicate themselves to prayer as our #1 priority in life

William Carey was reproached for spending so much time in prayer that he neglected his business. He replied that time invested in prayer was much more important than laying up treasures on earth. "Prayer is my real business! Cobbling shoes is a sideline; that helps pay expenses."

*Is that our attitude about our priorities?*

Many who have visited Rosanna Jones have been impressed with her commitment to pray for us and for our church. *Does it take being laid up in a hospital before we will make that commitment? How do we use the time God has given us now?*

**FOR WHOM are we to pray? 2:1b-2a**

**For everyone**

**For kings (rulers)** > for people in authority

In Paul's day these were people of questionable character and *values*

Nevertheless they were to be prayed for

Boy asked what Chaplain of Senate does. Dad replied, "He stands up, looks at the Senators, and then prays for the country."

Pagan conditions among politicians and in society isn't unique to 21<sup>st</sup> C.

Paul is living in Nero's day. Things were incredibly difficult.

World leaders always resisted the godly. Godly living doesn't make sense to pagan rulers.

*We are to pray for them.*

If we spent as much time *praying* for our leaders as we do *criticizing* them, things might be different! But we're like the little church that prayed!

**FOR WHAT are we to pray? 2:2b**

*[Pray] for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*

**4 things we should pray for:**

**Pray that we might live peacefully (IN PEACE)**

(First 2 ask for peace)

**Pray that we might live QUIETLY (tranquility & security)**

**Pray that we might live in godliness ( > that we might live GODLY LIVES)**

**Pray that we might live IN HOLINESS, dignity > appropriate conduct**

These conditions will result in the spreading of the gospel. [which leads us into the next question: ]

**WHY are we to pray for peace and godly character? 2:3-4**

*3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

### 3 Reasons we should pray for peace and godly character:

1. Because it's good
2. Because it pleases God
3. Because God wants everyone to be saved — to personally interact with the truth — to come to know Him

Prayer for government, and peace, isn't for our comfort, so *we* enjoy life,

— it's for the purpose of sharing Christ with those around us.

— it's so we get in tune with God's purpose to draw people to Himself.

This prayer is acceptable before God because it's in agreement with His desire to bring all people to Himself.

Having looked at elements Paul wants everyone to pray for, let's back up to transition into this section of Paul's letter “*Therefore, . . .*” **(2:1)**

*“I urge, **then**, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—”*

Whenever you find “therefore” in Scripture, study to see what it's “*there for!*”

Hard to spot. It refers back to Paul's personal charge to Timothy in vv. 18-19.

Indications Timothy is under the gun, that he's about to "*throw in the towel*."

That's especially evident in 2 Timothy where he is exhorted

- \* to hang on to what he has received, not with a spirit of fear and timidity, but with power.
- \* not to be ashamed
- \* to guard the good deposit
- \* to be strong and endure hardship
- \* to pass on to others what he has received
- \* to remember how Jesus suffered
- \* to imitate Paul who fought to the end and finished his course faithfully

Over and over again Paul urges him to hang in there.

*"Don't throw in the towel!"*

Pressure to throw in towel begins in

1 Timothy — not so intense, but present.

In 1:18-19, Paul urges him to fight the good fight, to cling tenaciously to faith, and to a good conscience.

Instead of giving in, pray for peaceful conditions and for godly integrity, so we can proclaim good news about Jesus and attract people to Christ.

Some Christians only pray when faced with crises.

Sign in principal's office: **"In the event of nuclear attack, fire, or earthquake, the ban on prayer is temporarily lifted."**

That's the way some of *us* pray.

Pray at all times, but *especially* when faced with adversity and discouragement.

Rather than throw in the towel, Paul desires us to pray for everyone, that God will bring peace in all the confusion and turmoil.

PRAY! Commit the pressure to God and expect Him to change the situation.

People who have had an arm in a cast for a long time can tell you what happens when the plaster is removed. The muscles atrophy; they shrink and become weak because they haven't been used. That's what happens to us when we don't pray -- we become powerless and ineffective.

E.M. Bounds: "It may be laid down as an axiom, that God needs, first of all, leaders who will be first in prayer, people with whom prayer is habitual and characteristic, people who know the primacy of prayer. But even more than a habit of prayer, and more than prayer being characteristic of them, leaders are to be people whose lives are made and molded by prayer, whose heart and life are made up of prayer. These are the people--the only people--God can use in the furtherance of His kingdom and the implanting of His message in people's hearts."

Samuel Chadwick: "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray."

Charles Spurgeon: "I would rather teach one man to pray than 10 men to preach."

Andrew Murray: "The person who mobilizes the church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history."

Corrie Ten Boom asks a *profoundly* simple question: ***"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?"***

Rather than turn and run, Timothy needed some time with God, in prayer.

## **THE BASIS FOR (this kind of) PROPER PRAYING**

**2:5-7** *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.*

*<sup>7</sup>And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles."*

**We are to pray this way because there is a mediator in God's presence who paid for our redemption.**

*<sup>5</sup>For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all men*

**We are to pray this way because it's in agreement with God's desire**

*<sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

It's consistent with the plan God revealed at end of Chr. 1: to show His mercy to sinful people. All people are included in our praying, even pagan rulers.

We pray that *we* might lead peaceful lives, and that *they* might be saved.

***WHY is God so anxious for everyone to come to the knowledge of the truth?***

Because there is NO OTHER WAY!

<sup>5</sup>*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,* <sup>6</sup>*who gave himself as a ransom for all men*

People don't *like* dogmatic approach.

It's egotistical to shoot down everybody else's faith. "*We need to be tolerant!*"

Problem: "*THERE IS NO OTHER WAY!*" Doesn't matter whether we like it or not!

**There is ONLY ONE GOD!**

If that's true, then all *other* gods are false.

**There is ONLY ONE MEDIATOR!** — between God and people

There's only **ONE WAY** for men to get to God. That **ONE** mediator gave HIMSELF — HE DIED — for **ALL** men.

*No one has been excluded because God doesn't want them.*

**God wants EVERYONE to come to Him and be saved**

The word Paul uses here focuses on an *emotion*  
 God **WANTS EVERYONE** to turn to Him.

There is a different word for God's will — for  
 His plan.

God **WANTS EVERY PERSON** to turn to  
 Him, but His plan includes many who will  
 never make that choice.

Because God *loves* every person and **WANTS**  
 them to come to Him for eternal life, it is  
 legitimate for us to *pray for everyone!*

**Jesus gave Himself for ALL PEOPLE**

Paul's point: we *can't* compromise!

We can't just throw out the truth to get everyone  
 to join us.

We permit people freedom of choice in religion  
 and worship.

But we can't compromise about our presentation  
 of the truth.

God Who made it all says there's **NO ONE ELSE  
 OUT THERE TO CHOOSE**

We can give people the freedom to choose a  
 different kind of religion

But people either choose God, as revealed in  
 Jesus Christ, or *nothing*, because there is  
**NOTHING ELSE OUT THERE!**

There's **ONLY ONE GOD.**

There's **ONLY ONE WAY** TO COME TO GOD to be saved

The **ONLY WAY** is Jesus who gave HIMSELF as a ransom, to pay the debt that we should have to pay ourselves, for our own sin!

*Even if the price is high, we had better get the word out!*

We pray for peaceful conditions so we can proclaim the truth to everyone God loves

That's why Paul was appointed as a herald to proclaim the good news.

That's why Paul was appointed as an apostle, one *sent out* as God's emissary

That's why Paul was appointed as a teacher, to explain the faith to pagan peoples

### **THE PREREQUISITE FOR PROPER PRAYING 2:8**

*I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.*

We are to dedicate ourselves to praying toward this end.

But **there's a prerequisite for this kind of praying: CLEAN HANDS**

Focus isn't on raising hands or not raising hands.

It's assumed they would raise their hands to God.

That's the way people prayed.

That was the common O.T. practice (1 Ki 8:22; 2 Chr 6:13; Ez 9:5; Ps 28:2)

It was a sign of dependence on God.  
 Sometimes I get concerned that modern Christians  
 are troubled by a practice that was clearly part of  
*biblical* worship.

Scripture is clear that our body is part of our  
 worship.

*In Scripture*, people stood to pray.

they knelt to pray                      they fell on their faces before God

they spread their arms before the Lord

they lifted their arms to the Lord

they clapped their hands

they praised God with harp, with cymbals, and with dance

Which is right? *God's Word*, our final authority, calls on us to  
 use ALL of the above in our worship!

We become concerned if someone raises their  
 hands or claps.

We're not to be like the church where someone responded  
 "Praise the Lord!" someone turned and said, "we don't *do* that  
 here!

Don't worry! I'm not out to transform our worship  
 services.

But people *should* be free to praise God in spontaneous  
 expression of worship, without being criticized.

There's a difference between a *show* or *rowdy*  
 behavior and *worship*!

Scripture calls us to worship with our whole  
 heart, soul, mind, and body!

**But that's *NOT* what *this* passage is talking about!** That's for another occasion.

The focus here is ***WHAT KIND OF HANDS*** we raise to God.

*Do we raise dirty hands to God?*

*Do we raise sinful hands to God?*

In context of suffering early church was going through, do we raise hands stained by angry reactions, fighting and quarreling?

Or, do we raise hands that, like Jesus' nail-scarred hands, are marked by holiness and by concern for others?

When we come to God in prayer, He wants our hands to be marked by those things that marked Jesus' hands!

—holiness                      —compassion  
—love for others   —NOT struggle of people  
                                         fighting for their own interests!

We come before God, conscious we are in good relationship with others.

As Peter said about relationship with our spouse, damaged human relationships get in the way of our ability to pray.

### **PAUL'S PRAYER CYCLE:**

**PRAYER => PEACEFUL CONDITIONS =>**

**PROCLAMATION OF TRUTH**

In the midst of times when society isn't very friendly to those who desire to live godly lives, when we're tempted to throw in the towel, Paul says pray!

Commit yourself to God.

Pray for everyone, especially those in authority.

That you may have peace and integrity, so that God may work through you, to attract other people to Himself.

**That's God's desire! *Is it ours?***