

The Need for Prayer – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs the church through Timothy to seek the humility of prayer
2. aim – to cause us to pray for and lead godly and submissive lives as we seek the salvation of all
3. passage – 1 Timothy 2:1-15

b. outline

1. The Need for Prayer in Godly Living (1 Timothy 2:1-3)
2. The Need for Prayer in Evangelism (1 Timothy 2:4-7)
3. The Need for Prayer in Submissiveness (1 Timothy 2:8-15)

c. opening

1. the **first imperative** of the letter
 - a. the things that Paul would have Timothy to do as the means to combat the false teachings in the church and to reestablish a sound footing in both orthodoxy and orthopraxy
 - b. Paul's advice to Timothy as to the first actions to be taken – in **vv. 1-3**:
 1. he commands the church to pray for *everyone who has influence* over the life of the church
 - c. **however:** in **vv. 4-7**, Paul *extends* the importance of prayer in the church to include its **greater purpose** in the life of the body
 1. **or, what is the real reason that Paul instructs Timothy to lead the church in prayer?**

II. The Need for Prayer in Evangelism (1 Timothy 2:4-7)

Content

a. the controversy of these verses

1. **1 Tim. 2:4** is coupled in Arminian/semi-Pelagian soteriology with **2 Peter 3:9** (in the N.T.; **Ezek. 18:23,32** in the O.T.) to argue the following (**i.e.** because God desires “*all people*” to be saved ...):
“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9) ... Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? (Ezek. 18:23)”
 - a. that there is no concept of *individual election* in the plan of God re: the salvation of humanity
 1. **i.e.** these verses imply that God has not (in fact) preordained a certain people to receive his grace and mercy, but (rather) extends the “offer” of salvation to all humanity equally
 - b. that the atonement of Jesus is not limited only to a *specific* people, but is universal in its intention
 1. **i.e.** the above must imply that the work of Christ on the cross had universal applicability, limited only by the *free will choice* of humans to apply it to themselves by faith
 - c. that the salvific love of God is not aimed only to *some*, but to all mankind and in *equal measure*
 1. **i.e.** the above must imply that God looks upon all men with an equal *quantity* and *quality* of love, not differentiating between them in any value or intention
2. one agreement with these conclusions:
 - a. it is clear that Paul considered the salvation of human beings to be important, and an important part of the mission of the church – he writes this as the outcome of what God considers “good and pleasing” (**see below**)
3. some objections to these conclusions:
 - a. this view of salvation agrees that it is entirely by grace, but the Arminian is forced to “invent” **a new definition of grace** and apply it universally in order for this “equal offer” to be made
 1. they call it *prevenient* grace = preceding in time; a divine grace that precedes human decision; a “mechanism” by which all humanity is equalized before God so that the offer of salvation can be equally accepted by all – thus salvation is “by grace” because the grace is universal
 2. however, there is absolutely no evidence of this prevenient grace in the *didactic* portions of Scripture – **1 Tim. 2:4** makes no mention of grace and does not imply a universal *grace*
 3. and, *experience* (both historically and biblically) strongly suggests that there have been many peoples who have had *no opportunity* to hear of or embrace the saving work of Christ
 - a. **e.g.** the Amorites living in Canaan in the days of Abraham, with no revelation of Yahweh
 - b. **e.g.** the claim by Pope Francis (and Billy Graham) that God is willing (by virtue of his universal love) to embrace anyone who lives “according to the light they have been given”

1. **note:** this idea is a direct denial of **Romans 1:21-22** – “*although they knew God, they did not honor him or give thanks to him ... their foolish hearts were darkened*”
4. and, the very *definition* of grace is lost within this “universal” definition – any *radical choice* that simply chooses everyone is *no longer grace*, but an entitlement
- b. this view of salvation argues only for a **“possible” atonement**, not an actual *completed* work by Christ that *accomplishes* the absolute salvation of anyone
 1. **i.e.** if it has to be “actualized” by our decision, then Christ was an *utter failure* when he died for billions who would refuse that work *or would never hear of it in the first place*
- c. this view of salvation suggests that God **loves everyone in the exact same way**, meaning that humanity possesses a *discrimination* of love that God does not (“less” than the *Imago Dei* in us)
 1. **i.e.** human beings are to *discriminate* in how they love; they do not love everyone identically
 2. **e.g.** T/F – it is okay for me to love *your wife* in the same way that I love *my wife*!
- d. this view of salvation fails to account for the reality that God has **levels of “desire,”** as we do
 1. a reformed argument is that this verse may only be referencing the *general desire* of God (**i.e.** his general desire against the reality around him), and not the *decretive desire* of God (**i.e.** what he ordains to actually happen in the world) – or, the *passive* vs. the *proactive* will of God
 2. (**again**) another form of *discrimination* that we exercise all of the time
- e. this view of salvation fails to **properly exegete** what Paul’s *real intention* was here
 1. (**quickly**) a distinction of interpreting these verses using a *grammatical-historical* approach vs. a more *fundamentalist-literal* one
 2. or, what was Paul’s original intention with these words as his audience would have understood them within the *words’* (immediate) context vs. implying an intention from them in *our* frame of reference *ignoring* the context around them, using them only as a *proof text*?
 3. or, more specifically, *in context*, “*all*” of *what*? (**i.e.** if all means all, all the time) – like “faith”, this word also requires an *object* (or *subset*) to be understandable (**i.e.** all people of *what*?)

b. the content of these verses (by exegesis)

1. **v. 1** – Paul commands the church to pray in every imaginable way that they can
 - a. **i.e.** the importance of prayer in the life of the church
2. **v. 2a** – Paul commands that this prayer be made for all *kinds* of people in high positions
 - a. “*all people*” is *modified* by the words that follow: “*for kings and all who are in high positions*”
 - b. there is no “and” between the two phrases, thus the “*for*” modifies the “*all*” = all people who are in positions of influence – those in a *higher social class* and who thus have influence in the world
 - c. failure to recognize this gets you “off course” in understanding the same phrase in **v. 4**
3. **v. 2b** – Paul believes that this prayer is essential in order that we made live “*quiet*” and “*godly*” lives
 - a. **i.e.** prayer for those in higher social classes will lead (hopefully) to a condition where the church is able to live and work and perform its mission in the world without hinderance
4. **v. 3** – Paul knows this is pleasing to God because it will afford the church an environment in which to do something *more in regards to those in the higher classes*
 - a. **i.e.** not just having a peaceful life, but having an *opportunity* to proclaim the gospel to those in the higher social classes – Paul is not urging prayer for believers to have “comfort”, but to have *opportunities*, particularly when it comes to those in higher social classes
5. **v. 4** – Paul knows that God does not desire to save only one particular social class, but *all social classes*, including kings and those in authority
 - a. there is *no reason* to believe that Paul would “switch” mid-thought from his concern for kings and magistrates to the universal whole of humanity – he is still thinking of them
 - b. **LOW:** it is God’s purpose that the prayers of the church would result in opportunities to preach to kings and magistrates because it is his desire to see people from every class saved
6. **vv. 5-6** – Paul knows that Christ is the only mediator before God, **even for kings**
 - a. “*mediator*” = someone who “stands between” two opposing parties in order to bring them together
 1. Christ stands between the “*one God*” (who is just) and “*men*” (who are sinful) – he appeases the justice of God on behalf of men, drawing them together in a permanent relationship
 - b. “*ransom for all*” = Christ gives *himself* as the “price” needed to satisfy the requirements of God
 1. (**again**) the “*all*” is modified from above – even the Arminian has to agree that Christ did not *actually* ransom everyone, otherwise everyone would be saved (universalism)
 - c. Paul knows that those in higher positions often consider themselves “beyond” the need of mediation – after all, they are *already* in positions that warrant honor and glory
 1. but, it is only in the mediatorial work of Christ that these “higher classes” will ever find *true* favor
 - d. and, Paul recognizes that the church will often “ignore” these classes of individuals because they bring opposition against the church, or are “unapproachable” or “untouchable”

1. **e.g.** it is possible that the Jewish believers at Ephesus were unwilling to engage the *heathen* leadership around them – some of the *heterodoxy* of the church may have been the teaching that only *Jews* were saved in Christ, and so there was no need to preach to *heathen rulers*
- e. **Paul is concerned that the church not only be a praying people, but a people praying for opportunity to preach the gospel to everyone God leads into their path**
- f. **the lack of focus by the church on the kind of prayer espoused by Paul here leaves the church vulnerable to the belief that it has little responsibility to engage in widespread evangelism – to just say “God desires all to be saved” is never enough**
 1. **note:** the lack of evangelism in semi-Pelagian churches should be proof-of-concept here: true, they believe everyone has a “choice,” but they make little effort to bring that choice to bear