

9/24/23 - 1 Tim. 2:1-7 - "Expansive Prayers & Particular Grace"

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[0 : 00] Today's scripture is from 1 Timothy, chapter 2, verses 1 through 7. First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 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 it is pleasing in the sight of God, our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

For 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, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

For this, I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I'm telling the truth. I am not lying. A teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

This is the word of the Lord. Amen. I'd like to throw out some statistics for you. The world population as of 2021 is over 7.8 billion people.

[1 : 26] 7.8. Of those 7.8 billion are 331 million in the United States.

Of those 331 million are 11 million found in Ohio.

Of those 11 million, I'm sorry, yeah, 11 million. Of those 11 million are 220,000 in Mahoning County and maybe another 200 or more in Trumbull County.

That's still a lot of people. But still, even in Youngstown, over 60,000 people in Youngstown.

That's a lot of people, isn't it? I mean, 7.8 billion is pretty crazy. That's a lot of people. And where there's people, there's all sorts of issues and drama.

[2 : 36] But even just 60,000 within the proximity of this church, 60,000. Today's passage turns our attention toward those large statistics.

And church history has proved to be challenging in reference to the allness of this passage.

It's been contentious theological debates and splits and arguments and, I don't know, probably bloodshed knowing us. But there's all types of prayers mentioned in this passage as it was just read.

All types of prayers. All people are being told to be prayed for. There's a notion that God desires all to be saved.

That God ransomed all through Jesus Christ. I mean, a passage like this can make a Calvinist cringe and a universalist celebrate and shout to joy.

[3 : 43] But is this a soteriological passage? Or in other words, is this a passage regarding salvation? And to teach us the finer details of salvation.

Challenges like this when we get into elephants in the room, it is important to contextually ground ourselves in God's Word and the author's original intention of writing.

And you find that in 1 Timothy chapter 3, Paul makes it clear. I hope to come to you soon. He's writing to Timothy. But I am writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and support or a buttress of the truth.

So, Paul is establishing an expansive outward responsibility for the church here in this passage, which is foundationally rooted in God's love for mankind.

And we see that throughout this passage. And so, in relation to the purpose statements, the context of the book, and the message within this passage, Paul is not only addressing issues found within the borders of the church, as we saw in chapter 1, of deal with these certain persons, but now he's encouraging how worship ought to happen within the walls.

[5 : 17] So, he's corrected errors and issues, but now he's encouraging worship. And guess what? It begins with prayer. Amen indeed.

I love how Lee Strobel once said, it's a sentiment. I don't agree wholeheartedly with the implications of the theological dangers of something like this, but I appreciate the sentiment of when Lee Strobel says, Christian, if today Jesus said to you, I'm going to answer every single prayer you prayed last week.

If he said that to you today, would there be anybody new in the kingdom of God tomorrow? Are we praying fervently, consistently, and expectantly for lost people?

I think we can all appreciate that sentiment. Let's dive into this sermon today, and it is titled, Expansive Prayers and Particular Grace.

And I'd like to pray through the words of an author here. Let's pray. Father, as which is stated in the Valley of Vision, may your people be refreshed, melted, convicted, comforted, and help me to use the strongest arguments drawn from Christ's incarnation and sufferings that people might be made holy.

[7 : 06] Help me, Lord, in my need of your support, comfort, strength, and holiness, that I may be a pure channel of your grace and be able to do something pleasing to you today.

And in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. So a couple sections for us this morning in this sermon titled, Expansive Prayers and Particular Grace.

We see in the first section, one church interceding for all kinds of people. In verse 1, we see Him laying a foundation.

And just as any foundation that's laid, it's vital to any building project, whether you're with a 10-year-old building Legos or magnet tiles, it's popular in our home, or building the Eiffel Tower. The foundation is the most important aspect of a building project, where you lay the foundation, what your foundation is set to. All of that rests upon the strength of the building project.

[8 : 16] And here Paul is doing just that for the worship of God's people. Not addressing false teachers like we did in chapter 1, but he's transitioning here to the worship within God's people.

That is a contextual emphasis. He says, First of all then, now that we've addressed the issues, let's get to work. I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.

I'm going to be doing this a lot today, getting my chest work out. This is the first of all his urgings directly related to the church.

His last was towards Timothy, of which we saw the sentiments towards Timothy of defending sound doctrine, and we were able to apply that. Well, he's talking to the church now.

This is the first of all his urgings. You see, here we are certain that the general prayers of God's people play a vital role in the particular foundation and the building project of his church.

[9 : 33] The foundation built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, according to Ephesians 2. We see here that that building project is beginning.

And guess what the mortar of that building project is between the bricks of God's temple and God's household?

It is the prayers of God's people. All types of prayers, he says. Supplications, asking God for something. Prayers, intercessions, interceding for someone else or something else.

And thanksgiving, praising God. And guess who it's for? All types of prayers for all types of people.

Huh. You might say, oh yeah, are you, everyone, each and every one we're supposed to name.

Well, we'll get into that argument as we continue within the context, but he specifically names some big things, outside of the box things, for the Ephesian church.

[10 : 45] He names in verse 2, for kings and all who are in high places. He doesn't give any distinguishing factor. He doesn't name Republicans or Democrats or independents or libertarians.

He says, all in high positions that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

A praying church is credible in the eyes of the world and powerful in the eyes of God.

Such a statement being spoken to the Ephesians would be quite strange for Paul to say this to the Ephesians. I'm sure that they didn't accept this with too much of an open heart, if we want to be real of our tendencies.

These Christians were living in a hostile world. There were no Christian kings of this day. There was a Roman emperor, Nero, who literally fed Christians to lions.

[11:57] Not only that, he illuminated his garden with the bodies of Christians burning. all people, Paul.

Yes. All people. Paul is exhorting the church to pray outside the box.

Christians throughout all time have been met with this resistance regarding the gospel because the gospel is radical.

It can't be received with open arms from just anybody. One way, Jesus, right?

This exclusivity of the gospel, that's almost scandalous to think about if we think long enough. The world receives the gospel primarily being met with skepticism, cynicism, and outright hostility.

[13:13] That's been all time, Christians for all time. And yet, in the face of opposition, God wants His people to keep peace.

And the only way, Paul says, to do it is if His church is praying. Now, we have to remember the good fight. Paul talks about the good fight often in his writings, and he talks about the good fight in the previous chapter.

That talks about the holiness and the representation of the gospel within. We've got to get this right with inside of the walls. But the good fight is within the walls.

And for that, there's not a good fight outside the walls, there's a good intercession outside of the walls. It's not beating your neighbor with your Bible.

It's loving them, witnessing to them, serving them, praying for them. You see, church, we need to be able to distinguish that if the world is hostile against us, we can't take it personal.

[14:29] They're after God. The world hates God. But our greatest enemy lies not outside of these walls.

That's between them and God. Our greatest enemy is from within the walls. That is the good fight. And wisdom is knowing where the good fight is and where a good intercession is.

It's interesting that prayerless Christians are often the ones responsible many times for disturbing the peace. These are Christians whose hearts kind of grow cynical at the problems in the world.

and we know that according to Psalms that the Lord holds them in derision and laughs, but it's not a laughing matter for the church.

It's not a time when the world is failing and the world is going a direction. There's a cliff coming and the world is marching towards that cliff. who are we to grow in cynicism, in perverse pleasure when leaders fall, when leaders mess up, when our hearts are growing cold in our attitude.

[16:00] Unfortunately, Christians who fail to pray for the world have forgotten how to fight God's way. As John Chrysostom rightly says and claims, no one can feel hatred towards those for whom he prays.

You see, prayer replaces hostility with compassion. Paul is not also promoting Christians to be pacifists, to be a bunch of doormats.

Jesus Christ never told us not to confront wicked rulers and evil ways. Jesus Christ never not told us to stand up against evil whenever evil comes.

But he is making a significant point here, church, and I want you to hear it. When the church covers the state in prayer, not only does that glorify God in heaven, but it also has the power to even receive protection and credibility from the state.

They see that we are not drawing arms and hostile, but we are intercessors on behalf of God. This is the story of the second half of the third century within church history, when the church finally got their first building like this.

[17:31] I mean, this was a huge thing. We see acts of peace go further than acts of hostility, and so it is for Christians who are duty-bound to prayer. It's true during the Roman Empire, during the Pax Romana, the Golden Age, if you can remember that, where roads were made to speed up missionaries on their trips.

It was true during the British Empire across the pond. They sped up the first missionaries on their journeys that went around the globe. It was true even in the American century.

During where missionaries were sent all over translating Bibles, reaching lost and unreached people groups, planting churches in every nation.

Peaceful methods are part of God's plan for the salvation of the world, church. Do we not see that? And so we pray for peace.

We pray for favor. We pray for opportunity to speak. Why? Because our advocating for souls is a peaceful demonstration of a church who truly has faith in God.

[18 : 46] Amen? And so this ties right into Paul's emphasis naturally into verse 4 where we see the second section, one invitation for all kinds of people.

He says this is good, all of which we just studied is good and is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The expansive and the far-reaching prayers of the church pleases God. That's enough to motivate me. In other words, our peaceful and hospitable composure glorifies our Savior.

An important addition and a reminder of our wickedness because not just anybody needs a Savior except people who need saved. This is a great attribute to the person of God here.

Usually you see Christ our Savior or Christ Jesus. here we see God our Savior. He's like saying, don't forget who you were, wretched Christian. Don't forget the God who desires all to be saved.

[20 : 11] This is God our Savior. And if God desires all to be saved, what has the church become if we fail to pray for it? Right? Now, God's desire is not a decree.

That is the sticky point if doctrine and theology is at stake in this passage to breach liberal universalism.

Yes, God desires His people not to sin, but that doesn't mean that His people aren't going to sin. glory, honor, and praise, but that doesn't mean that all mankind will do it.

And so, we read here, God desires all kinds, a general statement, to be saved. It doesn't mean that all will be saved. We have to be able to distinguish desire from decree.

And this reality should fuel our worship, our prayers, and evangelism. Why? Because we care for what God cares for. We take our selfish hearts that want the world to suffer for their evil deeds against us, and we take the heart of God, and it changes our attitude, our motivation, and our prayer life.

[21 : 37] This is so foundational, and I believe that this is why it is the first of all things for the gathered church. church. This fuels all of our worship prayers and evangelism, because how will they be saved if we aren't praying for them?

Well, Paul says in verse 4, there is a way for them to be saved, coming to the knowledge of the truth. The world is full of lies.

Romans 1 makes that clear. they've sold out to a world full of lies. The church, with the Bible open, has the truth. And so the great intercession fuels the great commission.

If Jesus commissioned the disciples and the mission of the church to go baptize, teach, to go and do this mission work, if He's going to do that, the great commission is fueled by the great intercession.

Many have heard of the great commission, but so often we fail at that great intercession. You see, considering the verses in 1 through 3, we see that there should be an emphasis of the prayers of the church.

[23 : 08] They should be evangelistic. So at the heart of the great commission of God, fueled by the great intercession of the church, this is where divine sovereignty and human responsibility are working hand in hand.

And it is beautiful and not anywhere close to a contradiction. It has nothing to do with the salvation of the lost, but the sanctification of His church.

you and me today. This has great implication into our sanctification, how well we're doing in this life.

If God desires the population in general to be saved, how could the church's desire be contrary?

How could we ever allow our hearts to grow cold against the world?

world? It's a desire of God. It should be a desire of His church. It's a charge for us.

[24 : 13] God saves and sends. That's a work of God. And our identity is innately found in calling and truth. You know what? I want to desire what God desires.

I want to be about the Father's business, not the world's. business. This energizes us to pray according to God's desire.

And we see in the third section as well, we see one God ransomed for all kinds of people in verse 5. I think you should probably sense the general and particular emphasis of this passage.

You've got one church praying for all kinds of people. You have one invitation for all kinds of people.

And now Paul speaks of the one God who was ransomed for all kinds of people.

He says, for there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men. The man, Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

[25 : 34] The gospel expresses God's desire in verse 4, but it also expresses God's decree in verse 5, through the person and work of Jesus Christ on behalf of all kinds of people.

This is an emphasis saying one God, one mediator is almost like a New Testament Shema, as we remember in Deuteronomy 6, 4, the Lord our God.

Lord is one. God and Jesus are one. God made a way through Jesus Christ alone. And this is where Christianity is like no other, friends.

This is where Christianity is paradoxically at its narrowest, but at its widest. It's narrowest in its means of salvation, and its widest in its scope of salvation.

There is one hope for lots of people. Right? The hope of all the world was on full display on the cross of Jesus Christ, where He substituted Himself for us.

[26 : 58] He died in our place. His blood atoned for our sins. And we have a great reason to praise, church.

That bloody cross exposes that ransom. God our Savior, God our mediator, coming to one place, an exclusive place at the cross.

It's a narrow road indeed. This is the gospel. God saves at God's time, according to God's will.

It is particular. It is definite. And yes, we can get lost in all of these debates on how God saves in these verses and before we know it, the rapture will come.

And then we got no problems anymore. We can get lost in all those debates or we can have the context to reinforce the whole main point of Paul writing this.

[28 : 10] Prayer. Looking back upon the context, prayers, therefore, are fueling the gospel. people. All God is and all God desires is the object of prayerful attention for you and me in all of our strivings.

God, through Jesus Christ, doesn't just make salvation possible. He made it actual in these verses. And just as Paul was duty-bound to the work of the gospel, he says, for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle.

I am telling the truth. I like that emphasis there. I am not lying. Get this, guys. A teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Paul, being once a devout Jewish man, is now preaching to the outcasts in the world. You see, Christ's ransom propels the activity of the church's prayer life.

And that's for certain in this passage. Looking back on all the particularities and the generalities in this passage, I want us to sense this as we sort of wind down.

[29 : 34] We see the particularities. One church, one God, one mediator. but one church expansively interceding for all people.

One God expansively desiring all people to come to salvation. One mediator expansively ransoming all. What other motivating factor can get a Christian on their knees?

Christians? What other motivating factor can get Christians to reach the lost? What other motivating factor can get Christians on mission?

Only the gospel. Only the gospel compels the church to pray and the world to repent. only in Jesus Christ is the grace of God exposed by Him stepping in between sinful man and a holy God as mediator and Savior.

And guess what? God wants the world to know about that. Come on church. Maybe you're not in Christ today.

[30 : 59] and you see this expansiveness. You see the billions and billions and billions of lots of people in the world, not to mention the lots of people in Youngstown or the lots of people at YSU's campus.

And you sort of get lost. You feel like, well, I don't know. You're saying, I'm part of His massive plant?

I don't want you to get lost in the generalities of the passage, especially of God's salvific activity in the world.

Because while God desires all to be saved, we know that He looks through the billions and billions and billions and sees one heart beating and one heart to replace a heart of stone with a heart of flesh.

That's what God sees in the expansiveness of His desires. God wants you to know that today if you're not in Christ. God wants you to be saved saved.

[32 : 14] And come to the knowledge of the truth. What is truth? His word is truth. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through Jesus. That is the gospel. How? Faith. Ephesians 2, by grace you have been saved through faith.

Romans 4, not by works of holiness or of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. It all depends on faith, according to Philippians 3. God, our Savior and mediator, is calling you today to come.

And so, do not hinder yourself any longer from making those steps. We have baptisms next week, and what a joy it would be for you to follow in obedience with Jesus Christ's command to be baptized.

baptized as an expression of that heart that God changed within the massive expanse of the gospel. But for believers also, the truth that God loves the world, that He desires all to be saved, and so commands us to preach the gospel to all nations, and we should pray for their conversion.

[33 : 38] And I would challenge all of us in our crazy world today, that there is no distinction between praying for a drag queen and praying for a drug addict.

That is who we are to pray for. A single prayer can have exponential effects in the climate of our day.

God's desires all of the church to pray. You're all part of it. If you're warming a seat today, welcome to the church. We have to pray for the lost.

And while we can neglect so many things in our Christian lives, let's not neglect this. Let's get this one right. It is the first of balls. Let's pray.

Let's pray.