

1Tim 23-11-05a

This is the 5th of November, 2023. We continue our study in the book of 1 Timothy. We're in chapter two.

We have seen the exhortation to prayer for all men and for kings and those in authority. And the purpose is tied back to the purpose that was stated in chapter one. We'll pick up at that point this morning.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, we're grateful for this time of fellowship and investigation, an opportunity to learn more about your plan and purpose so that we can redeem the time and invest the hours that are allotted to us in a way that counts for eternity, that prepares us for service and function, both now and in the ages to come. We pray that as we look at this letter from Paul to Timothy, that your Holy Spirit will minister it to each of our hearts, help us to understand what it means in terms of our opportunities and responsibilities so that we can reflect the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, shine a light in the midst of our ever-darkening generation, and be fully prepared for that day when the Lord Jesus comes to take us to himself and present us before your throne.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. Well, let's take a quick, fresh look at chapter two. I exhort, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks.

This is just taking the opportunity to talk to God about what is going on around us and turning it like a gem in the light. Supplications, these are specific requests that we might make. Intercession, this is particularly lifting others up before God.

And the fact that this is in scripture tells us two things. First of all, what a privilege we have to come boldly before the throne of grace, as it says in Hebrews, to find grace, to help in time of need. It is a privilege that expands and grows the more you think about it and the more you realize that the creator God of the universe lets us come in as his children and unburden our hearts, express to him our concerns, our love and care for those around us.

And it isn't an idle exercise. There are many things that we do and that people do and they seem soothing, they are palliative. People tell themselves, just breathe, take a beat, count to 10.

We have little tricks that we use to try to stabilize ourselves under pressure. When there is a crisis, when there is a loss or a bereavement or an emergency of some kind, we immediately launch defensive mechanisms to keep from being completely disabled and bowled over. I was listening to a lady talk about the school shooting that took place and a related shooting that took place.

We have these crazy guys that are off their rocker and go and start firing into crowds and so on. But the part that interested me is this lady was out and about. You could think of this recent bowling alley shooting and just people picking odd locations and letting loose with a weapon and people are caught off guard and freeze.

It is as though the surprise and the shock of this attack prevents them from processing it in a way that results in action. Not everybody has this reaction. Sometimes you hear a loud noise and people immediately startle or run away.

But it interests me that there are people who freeze and just can't move. And they say, I see a child walking out into a busy street and I think, well, surely they're going to stop. There was an example of an instructor with a child and they thought, well, the instructor will stop the child.

And when the instructor's attention was distracted and this child went into harm's way, this nearby parent couldn't, was just in such shock and surprise that this was unfolding, couldn't take action. And this is something that in the military and in first responder training and so on, they teach you to think under pressure and to respond more quickly because it is often a learned skill to function and to immediately think and act when the situation requires. And these are good for navigating situations.

It's good for meeting an urgent need when you're driving to have your reflexes so that if something unexpected suddenly appears like a deer in front of your car, you have reflexes that will kick in and prevent damage and accident and so on. However, and I say this carefully, but when we come to God in prayer, we are accessing a kind of privilege. We are exercising a privilege and accessing the power of God.

And we have a limited ability to affect our circumstances by training, by experience, to be better at quick reaction or better at handling even in conversation. You can have a flash of awkwardness or a sudden controversy or debate arises that you didn't see coming and you don't want to be in and you're immediately fearful that somebody's feelings are gonna be hurt or someone's sensibilities will be offended and you've kind of stepped in it or somebody else has and you're left with this, what do I say? How do I get out of this gracefully? And we think, well, I need to resolve this circumstance. This circumstance, I want it to come out in a happy way.

I want things to go well in the circumstantial world. It's natural, it's a wonderful instinct to have, but as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is an additional dimension to our lives and that is the presence of God, the promises of God and the power of God. When we incorporate those into our thinking as Paul is exhorting us to do here for all men, so whatever situations are coming up, whatever authorities are making grand decisions, there is this command and it is first of all.

This isn't first in a list. I could give you the Greek grammar here, but this isn't, I'm gonna

give you three points and this is the first one. Paul says, this is the most important thing I'm talking about right now.

First and foremost, having given us chapter one, having talked about people who make shipwreck of their faith because they get off track and off the mark, having talked about in verse five, the purpose of the commandment is love and this love has definable and attainable sources. We don't have to scrunch up our eyes and grit our teeth and excrete this love. We don't have to manufacture it.

We don't have to fake it and hope that it becomes real at a certain point. This love has solid God-given sources. What are they? The pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith, genuine faith and we cultivate these.

This is the strategy of the indirect approach, as I said. So we concentrate on a pure heart. Do I have impurity in my heart? Remember, the psalmist says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

Am I jealous? Am I bitter? Am I worried? Am I unforgiving? Am I maintaining and regarding some form of iniquity? In my heart, this stops my prayers. I'm never gonna get to chapter two if I don't have a pure heart and I'm certainly not gonna be capable of the supernatural love that is our privilege to access and to practice. It's a supernatural love.

You can't get it by rote. You can't get it by practice. You can't get it by a formula.

You can't repeat a mantra. You can't pray the prayer of Jabez. You can't recite a verse.

This love, this supernatural love, which is the purpose of all of the instruction in scripture, all of it, God is love. We love because he first loved us. Salvation originates in love, John 3, 16.

And we are to reflect the love of Christ as his representatives on this earth. It is not a common love. A pastor some of us listened to years ago used to say anything an unbeliever can do is not the Christian life.

It's not the spiritual power of God. And that has two consequences. First of all, we don't have supernatural power when we are accessing the common tools of human effort.

And secondly, even if we do stop the child from running into the road, even if we do hit the brakes in time to not hit the deer, even if we do stabilize ourselves, we take a breath, we count to 10, we don't damage somebody's feelings or expectations in a conversation, we manage to put on the brakes and stop, and we have improved a circumstance. Here is the question for believers, specifically and exclusively for believers. This thing that just happened, this circumstance that is better, does it reflect the glory of God? Does it invite people to look for the source of this supernatural love and this supernatural power that has infused us with wisdom, with self-control, with fruit of the spirit, not fruit of effort,

not fruit of good intentions, but fruit of the spirit? When that is in evidence, the human heart recognizes that there is something related to God going on.

This is Romans chapter one, what may be known of God is manifest, it's in creation, it's in the heavens, it is in circumstance, it is in the presence and convicting ministry of the spirit. And all human beings have a sensibility to the presence and the power of God. We recognize it instinctively.

God has put eternity in our hearts, as Solomon says. So the question is, if I hand a \$20 bill to a vagrant and he gets a good meal out of it, he doesn't misuse it, he actually uses it for food and gets nourishment and strength for another day. The question is, has God been glorified? Any unbeliever can hand a 20 out the window.

A believer can do it. What is the difference? What are the thoughts and intents of our hearts? And this is Paul's subject in chapter one, a pure heart, a good conscience. This is our moral sense, recognizing what is right and what is wrong, why it is right and why it is wrong.

This is a robust understanding of morality and ethics and right and wrong from a spiritual perspective. A pure heart, we first of all, turn our laser-like vision on ourselves, identify, acknowledge and repent from sin. I see this, it's wrong.

I'm gonna take it to God. I will confess my sins. He is faithful and just.

This is our promise to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now I go two verses up to 1 John 1, 7 and endeavor to keep on walking in the light because God dwells in the light. And when I walk in the light and he is in the light, I have fellowship with him, he has fellowship with me and the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing me from all sin.

If I mention a sin, you know, they used to talk about homo logeo in 1 John 1, 9, they say the same thing. My logos is the same as God's logos. It's homo, it's the same.

So God says it's a sin. I say, yep, that's a sin, all right. But I don't change, I don't repent.

I'm not interested in fleeing it and abandoning it and ceasing to practice it. There is not cleansing and there is not forgiveness because that was a superficial sort of easy claiming of a promise hoping that, well, God won't get me now, I won't be punished or something. We have to have a genuine desire to please God, why? Because we are here to reflect the glory of God.

What did Jesus say? I quote it almost every Sunday. Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and be greatly benefited and have happier circumstances. If you remember, that's not how the verse goes.

Let your light shine so that others will see the good that you do and what? Glorify your Father who is in heaven. Jesus said, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me. The Lord has gone to glory.

What is the presence of Christ that draws men to Christ and through him to God, to the way, the truth and the life? It's us. No one gets saved without a conversation. God has chosen to share the gospel and to shine the light of his power through us.

This is the essence and the purpose of chapter one. The goal of our instruction is love. From a pure heart, we have to look to ourselves first, get the beam out of our own eye.

A good conscience, we have to know and understand the way God thinks, what he considers to be good. If God thinks that wonderful circumstances and an easy path is good and he has the power to bring about that good, then why doesn't he? Why are there wars? Why are there famines? Why is there child abuse? Why is there hunger? Why is there disease? Why is there hardship? If God is good and the ultimate good is perfect circumstances and God has the power to create perfect circumstances, then why doesn't he? And this is one of the standard atheist responses. If you are in a conversation with somebody and they say this biblical God thing's nonsense.

Any God that has the power to make the world good and he doesn't do it, he's not worth worshiping if he did exist. But this is the God of my imagination. So the question is a good conscience understands that God allows evil to blossom.

Doesn't mean we like it. It doesn't mean we become part of it. It doesn't mean we enjoy it or that we even are content to just tolerate it and let it have its way.

But we understand that as a part of God's plan and the Lord Jesus points this out in Gethsemane. Let this cup pass from me. We don't have a violent, bloody encounter with the Roman soldiers.

We don't have the cat o' nine tails. We don't have the crown of thorns. We don't have the nails being pounded and we don't have the Lord Jesus on the cross suffering for those hours of darkness.

Let's clean up those circumstances and not have that heinous crime, injustice, completely wrong, wrong based on the standards of the law of Moses. The trial was illegal. The charges were false.

Witnesses were coached and paid to lie. It was a travesty perpetrated by the religious leadership of the day. Why didn't God stop that? It was God's will that the Lord Jesus suffer.

And this is coming up here in our next context. But it is not the time for a perfect world. Why? Why don't we just get born into the peaceable kingdom? It's all sweetness and

light.

And God says, you know, you really need to come to me. I'm the source of life. I am the reason that everything is perfect.

And people would say, well, you know, okay, or eh, not so much. And there would be no sense of need. We wouldn't understand the horrific consequences of sin.

If sin were not exposed, the disconnection from God inevitably leading to sin and its consequence, death, we experience it. And this gives us capacity to appreciate the grace of God, the salvation of God, the coming kingdoms of the son and of the father, where righteousness is at home, where sin and evil are eliminated. But like exposure to a disease, we need to understand and be exposed to how harsh it is or people wouldn't believe it.

I think the angels in heaven probably did not believe that there were horrific consequences to having a different plan and a different priority and a different idea than God's. When Lucifer said, well, why don't I raise my throne above the stars of God? I will be like the most high. I'll have a different agenda and a different plan.

We don't need God. We're sentient, we're powerful, there's a lot of us. Why can't we just do our own thing, separate and apart from God? Well, God could have said, that's a bad idea, Lucifer, and you third of the angels that are sympathetic with him.

God could have spoken a word or thought a thought and they would have disappeared. But they didn't. Why? It is for the benefit of the two thirds of the angels who did not fall, who did not sympathize, who did not agree.

And God is demonstrating so many aspects of his character that can't be seen in a perfect environment. You remember years ago, I used to use the example of Daniel Boone when he was engaged his wife to be Rebecca and he sat down beside her on the front stoop of the cabin and when he was coming, calling and courting her parents cabin there and they were sitting on the stoop and he took out his big hunting knife and grabbed her apron and just ripped it right down the middle. And she looked at him in stunned surprise and said, Daniel, what did you do that for? And he said, Rebecca, I always see you here at your parents in ideal circumstances.

I just wanna see you in a different circumstance. I wanna see how you're like when things aren't perfect. And evidently her response was satisfactory because he married her and they had a long married life together, but what are you like when you're alone? What are you like when you're under pressure? What are you like when things don't go the right way? In a world of evil and sin, we become acutely aware of our need.

Who is sufficient for these things? We greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world, but we're not greater than he that is in the world. We need the presence and

power of God. So Paul says the purpose of the commandment is love.

It's easy to love when everything's perfect. It's easy to be nice when everything is nice. How easy is it when there is stress, when there's adversity, when there is hardship, when there is calamity, when there is bereavement, when there is solitude? It's fascinating to read the memoirs of John McCain or Admiral Stockdale or others who were prisoners of war in Vietnam and the hours and days and weeks and months that they spent in solitary confinement.

And what do you turn to under that kind of pressure? Do you lose your marbles? And this is the reason that God allows these terrible things into our lives. But the goal of our instruction is love. God is love.

His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And this is the goal. If you have the three Christian virtues of faith and hope and love, the greatest of these, Paul says, is love, because it is the culmination and the outworking of a genuine faith, a good conscience, a pure heart, and hope that there is a purpose in enduring.

There is a purpose in coping. There is a purpose in combating in spiritual warfare, putting on the armor of God, resisting the devil, wrestling with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age. It isn't just to achieve a better circumstance.

It isn't just to stop losing money or stop hurting and damaging people in our periphery. It has an eternal component. It builds something in our soul that prepares us for service and function now and in the ages to come.

It is redeeming the time, taking time and circumstance, and by God's grace and in God's power, investing that capital in eternity. Do not lay up for yourself treasure on earth where moth and rust corrupt, where thieves break in and steal, Jesus said. Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.

What is this treasure? It is that which we do take with us when we go. By death or the rapture, most likely death. That is the rapture for us.

What do we have when we arrive? Oh, look, here is a house and here is a well-stocked pantry. Here is furniture. Here are resources because God's plan is gonna go forward.

We don't just enter a painting in the eternal future. God is as busy in the future as he is right now in the present in the world. And in the same way that people are activists for change and action, Christians should be involved in addressing poverty and spreading the gospel and all these things.

And we think, well, there's an agenda, there's a plan, there's a purpose, there's a program. We've got to get with it. God is at work, willing to do for his good purpose.

He is every bit as busy and working in the eternal future. And the question is, will we be prepared to be a part of that or not? So this pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith, genuine faith, we take every bit of that with us when we move forward into the future. That is our hope, faith, hope, and love.

The greatest of these is love because understanding that hope, knowing that this is training, we've all been through some kind of training. We've all been subject to education. I took the Instructional Systems Development course in the Marine Corps and learned about learning objectives.

And the student, given the following equipment, will perform the following task to the specified standard. You've been given these things. Here is a set task.

Here is the standard by which it will be measured whether you succeed or fail. That's the essence of instruction. We are being instructed right now.

That is why all scripture is God-breathed and profitable for what? Doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness so that we become mature and are thoroughly equipped for every good work, good work now and good work into the kingdoms that are to come. That's the goal. Therefore, in chapter two, verse one, I exhort most importantly, first of all, that you witness, that you evangelize, that you find orphans and widows and help them.

What is the very first and most important thing Paul tells Timothy, the pastor of this church in Ephesus? Pray. There is no such thing as a healthy Christian life that does not have a healthy prayer priority. Not just component, priority.

First of all, pray. Supplications, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks. There is variety in prayer.

We look for those things to be thankful for, for answered prayers, for provisions, protections, for providences that God has built into our lives. Thanksgiving. There is intercession, lifting up the needs of others, those that we know about, those that we can pray confidently and intelligently about.

As you know, I am not a fan of anonymous prayer. Somebody put on Facebook that Uncle Joe's cousin, Bill, is having prostate surgery. Please pray for him.

I don't know Bill. I don't know any of the attendant circumstances. I can't pray effectively and intelligently.

This is the mantra idea. Well, if we just say someone's name, God will bless them. That's not how it works.

Prayer is an opportunity for application of what we know. It is a test. It is a story

problem.

What can I pray and I know God will answer yes? We've been over this before. Intercessions. I can't pray, please let Uncle Bob get saved or please heal Aunt Susie from her affliction.

What can I pray? Well, what are God's objectives in these unfortunate circumstances and trying times and testing? What is God's objective in allowing it? Ultimately, it is for people to recognize and appreciate his glory. And you say, well, it's not glorious to let people suffer. It is glorious if in the fallen world where Satan is rampant and human nature perpetrates its evils, that God's grace penetrates and gives people comfort, peace, purpose, opportunities to build those resources in the soul that are a part of that treasure in heaven that they will have now and will have forever more.

And that in working through these issues and tackling horrendous suffering and so on to have confidence in God, to trust the way Job trusted. Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. This kind of faith is built in difficulty.

You don't get muscles. Have you seen this little device they have on TV that I just cannot fathom how they sell these and they sell them by the thousands. It's a little plugin deal and it's got a place for each foot and it just does this.

It just rocks back and forth. Your foot is moved forward and moved back. So you're sitting on the couch, you put your feet on this and it's like a little rocking chair for your feet, but it's powered.

You're not pushing against anything. It is carrying your feet forward and backward. And if you pay additional, you get the super model that moves them a little bit further and has speeds and such.

And it claims that this is gonna improve your circulation, this, that, and the other. Of course, there's a little fine print that says none of these claims have been authenticated by the Food and Drug Administration or whatever. It hasn't been tested or proved to do anything.

But the idea is, wow, I get a workout and I don't have to work at all. The machine will do the work. Common sense would tell you that if someone takes your arms and moves them, you might get flexibility.

Physical therapists will stretch your muscles and so on. But in terms of building muscle mass, does a machine moving your feet back and forth build any muscle in your legs? No, it does not. You have to push against resistance to build muscle.

Anybody knows this. You have to push against resistance to build strength. There's no other way to do it.

Even guys that take steroids, if you just take the steroids and you don't work out, you don't build muscle. The steroids accelerate the development of muscle tissue. It's at the expense of some of your internal organs.

But you can't just take a steroid shot and you suddenly have muscle. In fact, the steroid shots I've gotten, the doctor said, now we can't give too many of these because this dissolves tissue. You get too many of these in a joint and stuff goes away.

They would only give me one shot in my shoulder. They said, we'll put another one in there. It's gonna weaken your shoulder.

This is just for pain, the steroid. Say that to say this. Difficulties and hardship in our lives as believers are a momentary light affliction that works for us an eternal weight of glory.

Whose glory? Sam's glory? No. God's glory. Our afflictions are real.

They can be severe. They can be incredibly painful. They can be long lasting.

They can grind us in our human strength and our human attitude down to a nub. But when we turn to the power of God and we do it in prayer, all of us first and foremost should go to God. Take our burdens to the throne of grace, casting all our cares on him, knowing that he cares for us.

And what is the result? Whatever the circumstance, whatever the hardship, there was pushback. There was persecution in Ephesus against Christians, both by Jews and by pagans. And yet Paul says, pray for Caesar, pray for the Roman governors, pray for the centurions, pray for everyone in authority so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.

This word quiet is only used a couple of places in scripture and it's coming up in Paul's further words to Timothy when he says, I don't suffer a woman to teach, but to be quiet. It's this very same word. It's only two places it's used, to lead a quiet.

It doesn't mean a woman to be silent. There's a difference in silence and quiet. Would you say we pray so that we can lead a silent life? It's a quiet life.

It is non-controversial. It doesn't create angst and argument and conflict. It doesn't separate.

It doesn't divide. It doesn't create polarities. It's quiet.

It is peaceable. It is conducive to unity and to fellowship and to harmonious dwelling together. And when we get to it, that's all that means, that the woman should be quiet in church doesn't mean silent.

It means not want to stir up strife. I have been in and close to several churches and sad

to say the ladies in the church split the church and then tried to run the pieces and tried to recruit me to come be the pastor of some of the pieces. And a woman coming to my wife and saying, would Sam come and candidate to be our pastor was an immediate deal breaker.

Where are the men? Where is the God ordained order of leadership? Not that men are any better, but do Lance corporals give orders to the battalion because they're equal to the majors and the light colonels? There is an order. There's a structure. There is an assignment.

And we function within those assignments because it is ordained. These are ordained authorities. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our savior.

His goal in creating these authorities and establishing these structures is that all men be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. And those are not the same things to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. We've seen what an emphasis there is on truth.

Pilate's famous question to the Lord Jesus, Jesus told him, I have come to bear witness to the truth. Pilate says, well, what is truth? Well, being Pontius Pilate, you're never gonna understand the truth. You'll think you have the truth.

You'll think you know the truth. Truth is power. Truth is armies.

Truth is what Rome dictates. Sorry, no, you're looking at the truth. Jesus said, I am the truth as well as the way and the life.

But right in the center of the way and the life is the truth. And that is our privilege. And even in the midst of horrific circumstances, we can lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and reverence.

And this is what is good and acceptable. What's gonna hold up at the judgment? I did a lot of good things or I led a godly, reverent, quiet, and peaceable life. What is the pattern? What is the investment in eternity? God desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. Oh my goodness. When we come back from the break, we're gonna take a look at the misunderstanding of Christ's mediatorship and the content of verse six.

This is one of the most severe and pernicious attacks on your faith and your understanding of scripture that has ever been launched. And it is widespread, it is prevalent, it is dangerous. And we'll see it when we come back from the break.