

1Tim 23-11-26a

Good Sunday morning. This is the 26th of November, 2023. We're in first Timothy chapter two.

We're looking at this most important subject. The thing that Paul says is first of all, the supplications and prayers that should be offered for all men everywhere, the Kings and those who were in authority and so on. And we're going to move this morning into this section about the roles of men and women in the church.

Always a touchy subject, but one that is fruitful for our interpretation and application. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study. And we'll begin.

Father, we're grateful as we have celebrated this past week for your many blessings on us, both in the larger sphere of the world and the nation and our locality, our physical circumstances, as well as the wonderful spiritual and material blessings that we enjoy from you through the Lord Jesus Christ, our savior, the one who has redeemed us, made atonement for our sins, made us acceptable in your sight. We are grateful that he sits even now at your right hand, representing us, interceding on our behalf. We who are in so many ways unworthy and yet by your grace, we have been saved and we're conscious of the privilege that we have of coming before you and representing ourselves to intercede on behalf of each other, to recognize the all-important role of the Holy Spirit in conveying our prayers and in returning to us your answers through your word, leading us into all truth, giving us understanding and insight into how the truths of your word apply in our daily lives, working themselves out, not only through faith and hope, but in love.

We pray this morning as we look at this section of your word that the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts, help us to understand it, see its pertinence and find the path forward through an ever-darkening world with many obstacles, many challenges, both from our own nature and from the challenges that come from those around us, as well as the larger episodes and happenings that concern us and draw our attention throughout the world. We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified and we ask it in his name, amen. We are in chapter two, which says, therefore I exhort, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.

And immediately Paul would sense an eyebrow raising here, all men, and he says, yes, kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior. And that is a key to many things.

What is good and acceptable in God's sight? There is so much argumentation being made, especially in the modern day and the postmodern day, even more so, that the things that we do should make sense from an earthly perspective. We need to be

indiscriminate in our attention and care for the poor because everybody knows that the poor ought to be helped. Everyone knows that the homeless ought to be sheltered.

Everyone knows that the sick and afflicted round about us should be cared for and we should be universally and indiscriminately charitable, unconditionally love everyone, every place at all times. And the contention is made that this is just sort of a general good that everyone recognizes. There is a principle that I learned as a boy from my pastor at the time, anything an unbeliever can do is not the Christian way of life.

If an unbeliever can do it, we need to step back and say, well, what distinguishes me from that which is common to man? What does the Bible say about human standards of righteousness, about how good we are? What's our favorite verse for how good we are? Well, the one I learned even earlier as a child, we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags and we all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. We are all as an unclean thing. So if we are unclean, what happens to everything that we touch? What happens to sanctified things in Israel if they are touched by someone who has an issue of blood or who has blood on their hands or has been in contact with the dead? Well, the righteousness does not flow from the holy things to the soiled, the contaminated, the defiled, the unclean, it goes the other way.

And therefore there has to be a separation. There has to be a distinction made between what is holy and what is unholy, what is clean and what is common, what is sanctified and what is defiled. With this in mind, we recognize that our ability to generate intrinsic righteousness as human beings does not exist.

So how do we then enter into righteousness? Well, this passage I'm quoting, Isaiah 64, six, says, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags and filthy has a specific application. These are defiled. These are the product of the monthly affliction that women suffer.

That's the kind of rags that are being talked about. All our righteousnesses, we consider it righteous. The world considers it righteous.

This is charity. This is sending aid to those who seem to need aid. And in and of itself, we think, well, but how can it be wrong to feed a starving child in some far away place that afflicted with famine or governmental abuse or warfare? Well, who gets to decide what is righteousness? Whose standard gets applied? The standard of the world is anytime you feed a hungry child you have done something intrinsically good.

And we have sentimentality and we have compassion and we have a sense of understanding that these children can't fend for themselves. And if you do good for a child, you have done something intrinsically good. The problem is this is good as the world defines it.

And when we have in our passage, praying, interceding, giving thanks and making

supplication for all in our prayers, kings and all who are in authority, this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. I would not try to argue that it's not good to feed a hungry child. What I would argue is that this is good by the world's measure.

Ask yourself this question. If someone is gonna stand at the great white throne judgment and the books are opened and reveal what was done in this life. And someone says, but I fed a hungry child.

I donated to a charity that feeds thousands of hungry children. I did good in the world. What is the answer gonna be? Okay, come on in to the eternal future and the realms where God dwells.

That's good enough. We cannot enter into God's righteousness. We do not have righteousness credited to our account that should remind you of a verse.

How is it that righteousness can permanently connect to us and be credited and count for something in God's eyes? What does the Bible say about Abraham? There's Old Testament and New. It says, righteousness was credited to Abraham's account, why? What does the verse say? Abraham did what? First word in the verse, Abraham, what? Believed God and that faith was credited to him for righteousness. It is probably not a bad thing to feed a hungry child if they're young enough.

If you're feeding a 13 year old and he's gonna go around and start vandalizing and raping and pillaging and plundering and selling things to buy drugs and confederating with nefarious types as we've seen in Proverbs, joining with those who lie in wait for blood and so on. These are youths. Well, how young do you have to be to qualify as a child? Is it nine and not eight or is it eight and not 10? How young does they have to be before that's gonna be an intrinsically good act that isn't gonna have consequences later on? We think in human terms.

We pat ourselves on the back. We pat others on the back and we say, well, you did a good thing. The standard of righteousness is what God says it is.

Things are right because God says they are. This is critically important to understand in this passage right here, right now. This idea that praying for Nero and praying for the Roman senators and praying for the Roman centurions who are perpetrating no end of secular-based power grab oppression maneuvers in Israel and throughout the Roman empire, keeping little boys on the side for their entertainment, persecuting and oppressing slaves and concubines and stepping outside of their marriages freely and openly and without a flicker of conscience.

Nero is gonna use Christians, soak them in fuel and tie them to posts up and down his driveway so that he can have light at night. And the Bible says, pray for him. The human mind says, the Jewish mind, the early Christian mind says, Nero is evil.

The Roman Senate is evil. The centurions that abuse and kill people for slights, it reminds you of the samurai in Japan who walked around with an air of superiority and had their swords. And if they felt someone had slighted them by not bowing deep enough or not being obsequious enough or degrading themselves enough, they could just lop off their head with one stroke and have committed no wrong, right? Was whatever they said it was.

Wrong was whatever they said it was. And this was often the attitude in the Roman government, not always, but often. And this passage says, pray for all men everywhere.

Pray for these authorities. Why? Verse three, not because you have a hope of changing their hearts and minds or they will magically lessen their oppressive ways and their heinous acts of evil. Pray for them, why? Because it makes good sense.

You'll have some leverage over them. You'll make them do things they wouldn't otherwise do. Pray for them because God says to pray for them.

If God says it, I believe it, and that settles it. God says, pray for those in authority. I don't have to understand how it works.

I don't have to see a beneficial outcome. It doesn't have to make reasonable common sense to me. God says, do it.

God told the Old Testament Israelite men, do not shave the corners of your beard. Well, what if they'd had zippers in those days and it was constantly getting caught in trying to zip up your hoodie? I've got corners on my beard. I'd sure like to round this thing off.

It looks ragged. There are 10 reasons I can think of where I don't wanna do this beard preservation that God commands. Why would a Jewish man dress the way he dresses and not shave his head or the corners of his beard? Why would he put tassels on his robe? What kind of sense do the tassels make? They're a pain.

They snag on stuff. They get torn off. My wife, Miriam's got to sew them back on at least once a week.

I yank one of those things off. These seemingly arbitrary regulations and requirements in the Old Testament. You can eat this food, but not that food.

Well, I know all kinds of people outside the world of Israel that eat these and they're fine. It's economical. They make a great living.

They raise herds of swine and have a handsome profit. Why can't I have a ham sandwich? Why can't I have bacon? These are a test. Why was Abraham credited with righteousness? On what occasion did he believe God? Taking Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him made no sense.

You can think of moral arguments. You can think of witness arguments. You can think of example arguments.

You can think of other regulations from God that say if a man sheds blood, by man shall his blood be shed, going all the way back to the days of Noah. What was the real test that Abraham passed on Mount Moriah? God says it, I believe it, that settles it. I will do what God asks me to do because it is God who is asking.

It is God who is declaring it righteous. And the outcome, the outworking, the consequences of my faithful obedience to God are in God's hands. It doesn't have to make sense to me as long as I am sure because of a diligent daily exercise and practice of my faith, my prayer life, my communication with God.

How did Abraham know that God was telling him to take Isaac up there? He had to be sure that it was God that was speaking and not one of his own appetites or an impulse or some charlatan that had come up purporting to represent the word of God, purporting to be an early Old Testament prophet and saying, God says, go up there and slay your son. Abraham would be rightly suspicious. How could Abraham have the confidence to climb the mountain with his son, carrying the wood, leaving the servants behind, binding him to the altar and raising the knife? There was no doubt in Abraham's mind that this was an instruction from God.

So we have two issues here in 1 Timothy 2. One of them is the one I raised last week. People say, Paul is not an apostle. He doesn't have apostolic authority.

He's making this stuff up. He's creating a new religion for reasons known only to himself. It's not like he made money on it.

He's not dwelling in a mansion with gold bathtub fittings and fancy cars and six figure salaries per month that you see some of the modern purveyors of supposed biblical teaching manifesting. You know, examples of what I'm talking about. And can you trust somebody who is obviously making merchandise of the word of God, profiting from it, living an extravagant and profligate lifestyle? That would not be my first choice of sources.

But when you, first of all, are assured that this is the word of God, I am confident, I am persuaded, I am assured that Paul the apostle was chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ, commissioned by God, the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ to be the apostle to me because I'm a Gentile. All of us, to my knowledge, are Gentiles. And Paul's apostolic authority is first and foremost directed at us.

Many Jews benefited as well. Paul would often start out in the synagogues, but he is commissioned to be the apostle to the Gentiles. I believe that.

Not only because Paul says that Jesus commissioned him and appointed him, but the

Holy Spirit tells me that. Now, I cannot pass on to you convictions that I received from the Holy Spirit. How are you going to be equally convinced as I am that Paul's apostolic commission is authentic, that it is sourced in God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ? How are you going to know that? Both of us can start out, all of us can start out with Paul's testimony that he met the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road, that he heard his voice, that he was blinded, that he later had his sight restored, that he did not go to human authority or confer with the other apostles, but he went into the Arabian wilderness and was taught by the Lord Jesus Christ himself and returned to, first of all, address the Jews.

And when they turned down his message, you do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we go to the Gentiles. And that was where God intended for him to go all along. That's his witness, that's his testimony.

We need at least two witnesses for a thing to be confirmed by God's own standard. What is the second and more persuasive witness? You have heard it and I have heard it, it is God's Holy Spirit. One of the reasons we have the Holy Spirit is we don't have to wait for a prophet to authenticate himself with miracles.

We don't have to wait for God to show the credentials of a messenger by extraordinary visitation and extraordinary action. The witness of God's spirit. God's spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Someone else could say, you know, if you're born again, if you believe in the Lord Jesus, you are a child of God. You're a member of the royal family of heaven. You've got heavenly citizenship.

You have privileges as a member of the body of Christ. Being body of Christ, you share his sonship. You're a child of God.

You can get that from the scripture. That's one witness, much of it authored by Paul, but not him alone. How, where do you get the confirmation? Well, Sam says that I'm a child of God.

So that's the scripture and Sam. So that'll confirm it. Not good enough.

The witness we have for what is true and what is right and what is from God is God himself. God, the third person, God, the Holy Spirit. I can't put that in a can and hand it to you.

I can't put the living water from the fountain of life into a can, hand it to you and have you drink it. It has to well up in your own soul. What did Jesus say on the last great day of the feast? If you are thirsty, the one who comes to me out of his inmost self will flow rivers of living water.

How does that happen? Have I got a capped off fountain of living water in my soul? I don't. That is the Holy Spirit. That is the promise of the Holy Spirit.

If you're thirsty, come to me and drink. Out of your inmost self where the Holy Spirit will indwell and fill will come rivers of living water. And we receive washing of water by the word.

We receive refreshment and restoration through that. But if you are seeking the truth, if you are seeking God in heaven and his truth, God, the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind, the scripture says.

Paul says, how can I be convinced in my own mind? You don't have to take Sam's word for it or fill in the blank of some guy that wrote a book or wrote 49 books. You look at the scriptures and you look for confirmation of that truth from the Holy Spirit. I can't explain how that works.

Is it a feeling? Is it your gut? Is it some sort of instinctive? All I can tell you is just like the activation, perpetration and exploration and expression of your spiritual gift. You will just know. You will know.

You will know the truth, Jesus said, and that truth will liberate you from the shackles of sin, from the guilt of sin, from a history of sin, from the effects and consequences of sin. You will know that truth, that truth, God's truth liberates us. There is freedom from the past, freedom from guilt, freedom from shame, freedom from penalty, freedom to move forward and enter.

How do I experience that freedom? It is in and through the Holy Spirit. I cannot explain to you the supernatural mechanism by which that happens. I cannot express to you because it is different for different people.

Every child in a family, if there are multiple children, has a unique relationship with their father and with their mother. In a standard configuration home, you got a mother and a father and you've got some number of children. Every child has a unique and individual relationship.

Are they under the same standards? Are they held to the same expectations of obedience and faithfulness and trustworthiness and so on in a home? They are, but the nature of communication, some children are very sensitive, others are very rational, some are blessed with more or less self-control, more or less impulse containment, more or less perception, more or less giftedness in various areas of endeavor. They are unique and individual. Your personal relationship, and I stress the word personal and underline it, you have a personal individual relationship directly with God.

And it is His approval that counts. So, right now we have a democratically controlled Senate. We have a Democrat party president with whom many people disagree.

Many are questioning both public and personal choices, decisions and involvements and entanglements, motivations and so on. We can question regardless of who's in power, well, this guy is a real rascal in his personal life. Look at the things that he has said.

You can think of our last couple of presidents, our last four or five presidents, and you can find fault with personal life, with political leanings, with decisions, policies, and you can be violently in disagreement with those on any side, violently, that the country is doomed if this person takes office. That was said before the last presidential election about both of the primary candidates. This guy gets in office, it's over.

And there were people who were equally strongly persuaded that this guy is anathema, that this is doom. This is doom on a cracker if this guy gets elected. And yet both of them in the last two elections got elected and surprisingly, look at us, we are here with freedom to live a peaceable and quiet life with godliness and reverence.

Who saw that coming in all of the hyperbolic hand wringing and sweat grenade throwing that happened before the elections and it's already ramping up for the next election. Our confidence is not in man, it is in God and our standards of what is right and what is wrong are God's. Verse three, what does it say? This, to pray for all men who are in authority for the Caesar is good and acceptable in the sight of God.

That makes it righteous, that makes it right. This is kind of the object idea that we have when it comes to faith. With faith, the merit is in the object.

With prayer, the merit is in the subject. I don't pray for someone because they are worthy of prayer, I pray for them because God says it is good and acceptable in his sight. Isn't that interesting? For our faith in Christ, he holds the merit.

Our prayers for all of those in authority, that's good and acceptable for us. We become good and acceptable and engaging in that prayer is pleasing to God and that's why we do it. Not that we hope to confer a wondrous benefit on this Caesar and so on.

And it isn't the desires of the object. Caesar may wanna go conquer Britain or earlier Caesars marched into Gaul and went in for wars of conquest and there's depredation and there's slaying of women and children and all kinds of heinous things happen. Am I supposed to be praying for the kind of Caesar who is perpetrating these heinous acts? It's not his goals and his objectives, his actions or his objective perpetration of policy that is in view when I pray.

What is in view when I am praying for whoever this may be, the all Kings and those in authority? Whose desires am I thinking of? Look at the next verse. God, our savior desires all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. In the same way that Abraham climbed the mountain and did not see how the fulfillment of God's covenant promise that through him and his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed.

And here is his one and only long awaited seed. He's a 100 years old plus when the child is born. Sarah is 90 when Isaac is born.

And now he is old enough to carry firewood up a mountain. And God says, lay him on the altar and sacrifice him to me. How can that possibly be good? How can that possibly make sense? God explicitly desires it at this point and Abraham does it on that basis.

God is going to work out his own plan and purpose in ways I cannot see or comprehend. In fact, it is often counterintuitive. Why would I pray for somebody to whom I can attribute so many nefarious qualities, policies, decisions, actions, words, they're just a complete rascal and I'm supposed to pray for him.

What if I pray for him and his plans and things come to pass? That's not the issue. It's good and acceptable in God's sight. And it is God's desires that are going to be fulfilled when I fulfill God's desires for me, God is going to fulfill his desires in the larger world.

If I fulfill his desire that I be humble and faithful enough to trust his judgment and to do what he asks me to do when it makes very little sense to me, his desires are going to move forward. I conform myself to God's desires, God's desires are going to be accomplished both in me and elsewhere in the world. And that's enough for me to know.

That is all I need to know. Can you think of a purer expression of faith than to lift up before the throne of grace somebody who seems irredeemably hopelessly off track, specifically those in authority. We can lift them up anyway.

I don't know how it's going to happen. It doesn't make any sense to me, but I will bring them before the throne. This is the basis upon which you can pray for those who seem to be militantly unsaved.

You cannot pray that God will change their mind any more than you can pray that God will change the mind of nefarious kings and presidents and senators and others in authority. But I can say, Lord, you said prayer be made for all. So I would like to include this person in my periphery.

You have said that it is your desire that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. I want to lift up these individuals by name because I want to be fulfilling your desire on my part so that you will fulfill your desires as expressed here. And I commit these names, these people, whether in authority or in my periphery to you.

And I trust in your desire. And if there is a way, you will know it even when I don't. If we can lead a peaceable and quiet life in godliness and reverence through these prayers, I don't see cause and effect, but I'm going to pray the prayer and I'm going to trust you.

Substance of things hoped for, evidence of things not seen. I don't see how this works, but I don't have to. There's a gospel song called, there's a secret known only to him.

In fact, I think the name of the song is just known only to him. Known only to him are life's hidden questions. I'm in the darkness and I don't see.

And the chorus says, I know not what the future holds, but I know who holds the future. It's a secret known only to him. I know not what the future holds, but I know who holds the future.

That is the essence of the faith that is expressed in these prayers. So we do it and we do it thankfully. We do it with supplication.

We do it with intercession. We do it as verse one of this chapter indicates and leave the situations and the outcomes in God's hands. There is one God and one mediator between God and men.

Think about the day in which Paul is writing this to Timothy and Timothy is sharing these truths with his congregation. How many gods do they have in Ephesus? When I was walking around in Athens, they had little street side shops. These little tiny, you would call them idolettes, idolines, figurines, little tiny, that they reminded me that very first thing I thought of, maybe you remember this if you're old enough to have been a kid in the 60s, but they came out with these little tiny dolls called trolls.

They were just little arms and legs and usually a big shock of hair. And they were all, you could get them out of a, out of a gumball machine for a nickel. And they were just everywhere.

And I thought, you know, the world is going to be full of these little trolls. Well, the Greek world is full of them. They are so common.

They are like arrowheads. You can buy a genuine arrowhead in almost any gift shop at any national park or any other public place where you can do a hike for a buck or two. And they're thousands of years old.

They weren't made by, you know, people that came to Oklahoma after the Trail of Tears or in the Trail of Tears. These things were made by Proto-Americans before the time of Christ. Many of them are that old, but they're so common that they don't have any given one, doesn't have much worth.

Same thing with these little figurines. You can buy them in these old street side shops. They've got buckets of them.

They've got trays of them. They dig them up in the dirt. You try to plant a garden and some of these little figurines show up.

This is the Greek mind's view of gods. These weren't dolls. These weren't toys.

These were little good luck charms. These were little representations of the Greek

pantheon of gods. So when Paul says there is one God and one mediator between God and men, you don't have to please the God of war.

You don't have to please the God of love. You don't have to please the God of fecundity and crops and proliferation and multiplication. You don't have to find a way to, well, this issue comes under the purview of this God over here.

What is Paul saying? When you pray, all you have to do is pray according to the will of one God. There is one God. It's simple.

Do what he says. Believe his word. Follow his exhortations and instructions.

There is one God. Simple. And there's one mediator between us and that God.

One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. He took the divine that was inscrutable and made it understandable. He embodied it.

He incarnated it. He taught it. He expressed it.

And this is the great intersection between those gospels that we talked about last time. There is the gospel of the kingdom and it was revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ. But in revealing the immediacy and the potential of the kingdom for Israel, Jesus inevitably reveals God's character.

He is the fullness of deity and bodily form. And anything he says and anything he does is a revelation of God. The specific message he is giving in the gospels is to Israel, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But in revealing that message, he is also revealing the timeless and eternal qualities of God. And he is mediating between God in heaven and man on earth, specifically Israel in that case. But now we see that he came not only to save Israel, but to save all of those who will come to him in faith.

He's the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also the sins of the whole world. It is now revealed that it is the will of God that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, not just the Jews. So the paradigm revealed in Jesus Christ, expressed by Jesus Christ to a specific audience Israel is now extended, expanded and applicable for all men.

That is the overlap between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of Paul. Paul says, guess what? You can take what Jesus said and did and revealed. And now there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female.

And that male or female is gonna come up in our second session when we get to verse nine, where Paul is going to distinguish the roles of men and women in the church. And you say, well, I thought there was no male or female in the church. We're all one in

Christ.

So why is he going to distinguish them here? The very same Paul that says no male or female is gonna say men ought to be this way and women ought to be this way. How does that work? Well, we'll see that when we come back from the break.