

## **NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- Sunday 30th June 2024 am**

**TITLE: "The church's great priority" TEXT: 1 Timothy 2 v 1-7**

**SERIES: "Guarding the deposit" Pt 5 Scripture references from the ESV**

**1 Timothy 2:1-7** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, <sup>4</sup>who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. <sup>7</sup>For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

The RNLI has a hotel and restaurant at its base in Poole, where people can go to stay overnight or enjoy a good meal, with the addition of a lovely view. However, that is not why the RNLI exists. It exists to save lives at sea, and even the hotel has a primary function as a training centre. If the RNLI moved its focus from saving lives to providing hospitality, then they would be denying their primary mission.

- If the church were to move its focus away from seeking to save souls, then, in the same way, we would be denying our primary mission.

The daily fight to avoid making shipwreck of our faith (see part 4 of the series) is not just for the sake of our own souls.

**It is for the sake of those who are unwittingly, and even deliberately,  
steering their lives towards the rocks of eternal shipwreck.**

- When we drift away from Christ and the gospel, denying the truth of how God saves people, we undermine the Gospel of Christ
- When we begin to live as if Christ is not in control, when we fail to rest in God's grace and when we trust in our own righteousness, we undermine the Gospel of Christ

**Then we fail to fulfil the reason Christ left his church here on earth –  
to act as a witness of God's saving grace to those around us.**

The tragedy in Ephesus was not just that two of the elders had ruined their lives by drifting away from the gospel, but also that, in doing this, they had put the church's mission at risk.

- The church's mission is to hold out the truth of the gospel to the world for the sake of their salvation.

Paul shows this further on: **I am writing these things to you so that, ... you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.** (1 Tim 3:14-15)

The momentous gospel truth that sinners are put right with God through faith alone, in Christ alone, is to be held up like a beacon for all people to see so that they can come to know this truth.

### **The church is the pillar that is to hold up this truth**

The church in Ephesus had moved their focus from the need to save souls and on to fruitless debate

and speculation, making room for false teachers to spread lies.

It is easy for churches to do this. Once the mission of the church is no longer central, church becomes little more than a social club where we meet friends, or a debating chamber where we chew over the latest trendy ideologies. When that happens, we cease to be a place that rescues sinners from hell.

### **How can we keep the mission of the church at the centre of all that we do?**

The answer may not be what you would expect (v1 above). Rather than urging the pastor to run some sort of evangelistic course, or give training on how to share the gospel, Paul urges Timothy to

**make prayer a priority.**

There are other things to be done too, as we will see further on in the letter but

**Timothy's first priority is to get the church praying.**

### **How would prayer help the church get back on track with its mission?**

- Prayer changes our hearts, shifting the things that we consider to be duty deep down into our hearts so that they become burning, living realities.

Any call to bring someone along to Christianity Explored, share the gospel in the coming week or join a course on evangelism is likely to produce a lot of guilt, anxiety or perhaps a good start but a quick falling away of enthusiasm.

**The issue is a heart issue.**

Unless we have a heart to see sinners saved, we will not get on board with any activities to see them saved. That is where prayer comes in.

- As we pray for God to save sinners, so God begins to change our hearts to give us HIS heart for those who are unsaved.

**What is this prayer?**

1. **It is urgent prayer (v1).** There is urgency in Paul's tone. Paul uses four different words to describe prayer because his heart feels the sense of urgency, and he wants our hearts to feel the same sense. Men, women and children, some of whom we will meet this week, are unwittingly or even deliberately steering their lives on to the rocks of eternal judgement. Therefore, he presses upon us the urgency and great need to

**PRAY**

And not just to PRAY but to

**Pray, pray, pray, pray for those who are unsaved.**

2. **It is corporate prayer.** Paul is clearly expecting that it will not only be Timothy praying. He uses the plural form of the words for prayer. To offer multiple prayers implies people coming together to pray and ongoing prayer. He speaks about unity in prayer, clearly referring to men in plural: **I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling (1 Tim 2:8).** Then again, Paul is writing this letter to Timothy to show how the church is to conduct itself when it gathers, so the context of **v2** is the public gathering of the church. Private prayer is important too, but we are not to neglect this gift of corporate prayer.

**When the church gathers it is to be a praying community.**

3. **It is universal prayer (v1).** When we gather to pray, our prayers are not to be limited to prayers for our families, friends and our own church.

**We are to look outside and pray for all people.**

We are to pray for:

- Our neighbours who do not know Jesus, and the 10,000 residents of Broadstone
- The 67 million people living in the UK and the 8 billion people in the world, many of whom do not have access to the gospel.

We cannot pray for them by name, but we can pray the big, sweeping, but not insipid prayers, that we find in the Bible. Then Paul gives us a prayer (v2) that we can pray for our political leaders, particularly apt in the context of the new government that may well follow the upcoming General Election. We may not get the leader we want or the MP we voted for. We may not agree with their policies or be able to speak well of them because what they are doing goes against God's word. Nonetheless we are urged to pray for them, and to pray that God will enable them to govern wisely so that we can continue to have a stable society, avoiding civil unrest and enabling its citizens to live peaceful and quiet lives.

Paul is NOT praying for us to be able to live comfortable middle-class lives.

Christians will suffer persecution

for their faith. Paul experienced it, and warns us to expect it.

**Paul wants us to pray for the kind of freedom we need to have to be able to live out our faith.**

We are to pray that our society will be a place where we can live the godly lives that Christ wants us to live, for it is godliness that commends the gospel. People need to see evidence in our lives that the gospel has changed us to become more like Jesus Christ. So we are urged to pray for the government that will be in power at the end of the week.

Such a prayer might be: *Sovereign Lord God, we thank you for the stability that this country has enjoyed, that we have had freedom for many years to openly proclaim and live out the gospel. Lord, we ask you to enable those who lead us to act with wisdom and justice. We ask this so that we will continue to have the freedom to live those godly lives that commend Jesus Christ, our Saviour.*

**Such big, sweeping, but not insipid, prayer will enable us to pray for all people, near and far.**

**4. It is effective prayer.** Paul shared two prayers in his letter to the Ephesians. The second one ended with these words: **Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,** <sup>21</sup> **to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.** (Eph 3:20-21).

Prayer is effective because it asks God to act and God is NOT weak, deaf, ineffective or unconcerned.

**Paul puts prayer as a priority because he knows that prayer is effective.**

Paul points us to the heart of God and the Gospel of God as he seeks to motivate us to pray not just for ourselves and our own connections but for ALL people.

**1) We are motivated by the heart of God.** The kind of prayer that we have looked at is prayer that is good and pleasing to God (**v3**). God is pleased when we ask him to save people and to give us freedom to live out our faith, because God desires all people to be saved (**v4**).

This does **not** mean that all people will be saved nor does it mean that the doctrine of election and predestination are wrong. It **does** mean that God's heart is for the whole world to be saved.

- Our minds are not able to work out how God can elect some and also have a heart for all to be saved.

*Our tiny minds are unable to understand how God's sovereignty in salvation and human responsibility can be reconciled. Both are taught in the Bible and we must hold both in tension in our thinking* (John Stott).

It is clear that God does not reserve his salvation for any exclusive group of people, but his heart is to see all kinds of people saved.

**God is not a reluctant Saviour**

If he was reluctant to save:

- he would not have given up his only beloved Son to death on a cross
- he would not have come to earth in the person of his Son, borne our sin in his own body, and suffered the eternal death of Hell to pay the debt our sin deserves

- he would not, by his Spirit, pursue us, convict us of our sin and reveal Christ to us through his word.

### **God desires the salvation of all people**

**We are to give ourselves to pray for all people because it pleases him.**

**2) We are motivated by the Gospel of God (vv5-6).** Paul tells us that there is one God over all people, one mediator for all people and one atoning death for all people.

### **There is no other way for people to be saved.**

All 8 billion people on earth are under the one God of the Bible, and therefore accountable to him. One day, they will all stand before him in judgement, and they will need the only mediator who can mediate between them and God.

### **They need the Lord Jesus Christ to be their mediator**

No one can have their sins atoned for except through the sacrificial death of Jesus. There is no other way, but it is the exclusiveness of this that means we need to be inclusive in our praying. We are to pray for all people because:

### **All people need the salvation offered through Christ alone.**

Have you really considered how God would act if we took this to heart?

The Berlin Wall came down in 1989. A number of believers had been gathering for months to pray for peace and the numbers had grown, despite the attempts of the Communist authorities to stop them. The night that the wall came down, around 12,000 people had gathered to pray. *Coincidence? No. This was the kind response of a caring, all-powerful God to the prayers of his people.* (Bryan Chappell). What a motivation to pray!

In the week of the 2024 General Election, we will gather to pray for our leaders as Paul calls us to (v2). What better way is there to prepare? There is an urgency in this.

Our nation has drifted off course and has left behind the safety markers of God's word.

Rather than heading towards Christ, we are heading towards destruction. The church has the answer in the momentous news of the Gospel of God.

- How many people will die in their sin in the next few days?

As a church we need to wake up to the urgency of the situation. As a church, we **MUST** gather to pray for our nation.

We may not, like Paul, have been entrusted with preaching the gospel, or, like Timothy, have been charged with silencing the false teachers but

We do all have the privilege to pray.

We are to pray urgent, corporate, universal and effective prayers for all people  
We are to pray to the one God who desires all people to be saved and who alone is able to save.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,  
according to the power at work within us,  
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus  
throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.