



Sunday School Lesson Summary for January 8, 2006

Released on January 4, 2006

"Pray for Everyone"

LESSON: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Timothy 2:1-15

DEVOTIONAL READING: Colossians 4:2-6

TIME: A.D. 62

PLACE: Macedonia

GOLDEN TEXT: "I exhort first of all that supplications, prayer, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made to all men" (1 Timothy 2:1 NKJV)

LESSON AIMS

FACT: To study Paul's inspired perspective on prayer.

PRINCIPLE: To emphasize the importance of prayer as a Christian discipline.

APPLICATION: To encourage Christians to expand their personal horizons of prayer.

INTRODUCTION

While most Christians believe in and acknowledge the importance of a strong prayer life, many do not pray as they should. The reasons for this neglect are various ("I work, I have a family to take care of, I'm way too busy to pray." "I want to pray more but something always comes up and prevents me from doing so." "I say 'grace' before I eat, that's prayer, isn't it?" And a well known favorite excuse that some give is, "Well, the Lord knows my heart."

The truth about prayer is that it is the believer's means to communicating with God. It is as simple as that. If you truly desire to grow closer to Him, you will have to learn to include Him in your daily life... and not just before eating a meal. Increase your prayer life, and watch your relationship with Him become stronger. The children's song goes, "Read your Bible and pray everyday, and you'll grow, grow, grow." Contrarily, "Neglect your Bible, forget to prayer, and you'll shrink, shrink, shrink."

Today's lesson reminds us that as Christian disciples, we are responsible for not only communicating with God through prayer for ourselves, but we must also learn to pray for others-especially for those who are in positions of authority over us and others as today's lesson explains. We have got to get out of the habit of praying only for self and for no one else. "God bless my home, my family, my job, my health, my church, my this-that-and-the-other." Let us remember J-O-Y in our prayer life. That is, thank JESUS for what He has already done; lift up OTHERS in prayer; and humbly close by praying for YOURSELF.

Aside: Have you ever had someone ask you to pray for him or her, and you said that you would-but only you walked away and continued your day without ever giving a second thought to the person's request? Prayer is a special thing. It is not something to take lightly or for granted. For someone to ask you to pray for him or her says a lot about what that person thinks about you as being a child of God. This is a compliment and an opportunity to witness. Do not let the opportunity pass you by. The next time someone asks you to pray for him or her, stop right there that minute and immediately lift him or her up in prayer-whether it be in person or on the phone, let us believe that the requestor is sincere.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul had left his "son in the faith" Timothy in Ephesus sometime during the interim between his own imprisonments in Rome. It was a daunting task that he had assigned this young preacher. The great Ephesian church had some doctrinal problems that needed to be addressed. Timothy also had to cope with some strong personalities who were espousing false teaching. This situation is what brought forth Paul's letter of instruction and encouragement.

In last week's lesson, Paul reminded Timothy of his charge. Paul accompanied this reminder with further instruction. Paul also encouraged Timothy by citing himself as an example of the sufficiency of God's grace and His enabling power. With this as background, we make a transition into today's text.

LESSON OUTLINE

I. The Church's Prayers for Leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

II. Christ's Mediation for Humankind (vv. 4-6)

III. Paul's Apostleship to Gentiles (vv.7-8)

LESSON TEXT

1 Timothy 2 (NIV)-Instructions on Worship

1I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-

2for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

3This is good, and pleases God our Savior,

4who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

5For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

6who gave himself as a ransom for all men-the testimony given in its proper time. 7And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle-I am telling the truth, I am not lying-and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.

8I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1: Who were the Asiarchs, and what was Paul's relationship with them?

Asiarchs were not "high priests of Asia" as some people believe, but were according to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia delegates of individual cities to the provincial Council which regulated the worship of Rome and of the emperor. The New Bible Dictionary says that Asiarchs were men chosen from the most wealthy and influential families of Rome. Some were also chosen to become priests in the imperial cult to enforce the worship of Caesar.

Paul was a friend of several Asiarchs. Acts 19:31 tells where these friends of Paul's urged him not to go into an arena on the verge of a riot in Ephesus. Paul was far from being a man who shunned the company of Gentiles or even idolaters. Paul's attitude toward these powerful leaders makes his call to prayer more understandable in today's lesson.

QUESTION 2: Who exactly was Paul commanding the churches to pray for? (1 Timothy 2:2, 3)

Paul exhorted Timothy to arrange public prayer in the worship meetings for all people. The prayers of the believers were not to be only for each other-as some of us are guilty of doing today, but for "all men (humankind)" (v. 2b), and for "kings and all who are in authority" (v. 3a).

Let us not fail to remember our local, state, national, and world leaders in prayer as the United States continues fighting in Iraq. It is not our position as Christians to go against our elected leaders. They are in office, and we must respect them even if we do not agree with their policies and decisions. What can we do? We can show our beliefs and convictions through public voting, and more important than this we can petition God about our situations through our daily prayers. He always hears the voices of His children. This is His promise.

QUESTION 3: Why was Paul's command to pray for authorities especially surprising for the early church?

The early church's subjection to persecution by Rome and its mean-hearted leaders was a common and dangerous situation. Although the early believers had already been taught to love all mankind, here Paul specifically used four of seven New Testament terms for prayer for all of mankind: "supplications" which emphasizes personal need or requests, "prayers" which is the general word for prayer as we know it to mean, "intercessions" which suggests free access to God on another's behalf, and "giving of thanks" which is prayer with an attitude of gratitude or praising God for what He has done.

QUESTION 4: What two motivations did Paul give for the churches to pray for the community and its leaders? (1 Timothy 2:2-3)

The two motivations for public prayer on behalf of authorities that Paul mentioned specifically in these verses were "peaceable lives" and "God's pleasure." The believers in Ephesus, as in other parts of the Roman Empire, faced the danger of being considered a seditious movement opposed to the Roman government. By praying for Roman authorities, the churches would show reverence for the state and good citizenship.

QUESTION 5: How would prayers like this lead to peace for the churches?

Prayers like the ones Paul suggests led to peace for the churches because followers of Christ should be good citizens in general, even if the state is evil. Jesus followed Roman law, and Paul commanded it in Romans 13:1-6. Jesus gave instruction to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" in Mark 12:17. The only time a believer is to disobey the state or the state's laws is when it contradicts God. Peter said in Acts 5:29 that "We ought to obey God rather than men."

QUESTION 6: How would prayers like this please God?

By praying for authorities, Christians can live peaceable lives and be seen as supporters and not as rebels. Even more important as a motivational tool, prayer for the community and for leaders pleases God. Leaders include those in authority at all levels, from the neighborhood to the nation, and even other world leaders in other nations. God, who is our Saviour, accepts such offerings of prayer with pleasure.

QUESTION 7: What is the most important point to be taken from 1 Timothy 2:4?

Because God is for all people, not only those who already believe, it is His desire to see all people saved from their sins. He does not wish to see anyone lost. But, salvation is a matter of choice. The main point of Paul's statement in this verse is that God is not a God who delights in condemning people; He delights in our salvation and works mightily toward that end.

QUESTION 8: How is Jesus the Mediator and Ransom? (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

A mediator is someone who stands between two opposing parties and works out a solution. Jesus is a mediator because we were God's enemies, children of His wrath (see Ephesians 2:3). God's plan for us at that time was judgment.

We were to be punished for rejecting God and choosing our own sinful ways, but God was willing to allow Another (Jesus Christ) to take our punishment for us.

Paul also called Jesus our Ransom. A ransom is a payment to persuade someone more powerful to do something for someone less powerful. Jesus' death was a ransom, a payment in suffering. His suffering paid the debt owed by us to God so that we are forgiven and accepted in Him. This debt, by the way, is one that Jesus did not owe, and one that we could not pay.

Paul said that Jesus is the one and only Mediator, just as God is the one and only God. Many people are tempted to think that those who believe in other religions, if they are sincere, are just as saved as those who believe in the good news of Jesus Christ. Yet God's way is exclusive, as many Scriptures tell us. Jesus is the one Mediator-there are no others.

The message of Jesus as our Mediator and our Ransom is the testimony that we are to give to others. God's message of forgiveness through faith in the atoning death of the Messiah was the message Paul preached. It was the message he taught others to preach.

QUESTION 9: What did it mean to "lift up holy hands?" (1 Timothy 2:8)

Paul's command for public prayer for men was to be done with lifted holy hands. Nehemiah 8:6 and numerous other Scriptures describe the lifting of hands as a Jewish posture of prayer. More than just lifting hands, Paul called for the hands to be "holy." In other words, Paul wanted the hands to be lifted for the holy purpose of prayer by holy men (and women) faithful to God. Instead of seeing men who battled with their hands, Paul wanted to see the men praying.

QUESTION 10: How does praying for the community help a church?

Since the local church is made up of and is located in a community of people, it benefits the church to pray for the community in which it is found. An obedient and prayerful church will have a sincere concern for its surroundings, and will regularly remember in its prayers: the community, the city, the state, the nation, the continent, and the world. When a church follows God's way, it will have to be blessed.

CONCLUSION

Paul knew that prayer has to be a priority in the church and with its leaders. He strongly encouraged intercessory prayer, especially for those in civil authority. Such prayer was consistent with the will of God, who desires all to come to a saving knowledge of the truth.

Paul desired the leaders of the local congregation to be men faith and character who could lead the congregation in prayer.

Time has passed, but the great need for prayer among Christians has not decreased. Strongly encourage your students to take Paul's admonitions seriously.

PRACTICAL POINTS

Prayer should not be an afterthought; it is the most important thing we can do for others (1 Timothy 2:1).

Rather than complain about our leaders, we should be holding them up in prayer (v. 2).

If we want to be Christlike, we will cultivate an intense desire to see people come to salvation in Him (vv. 3-4).

We have a simple message: one God, one Saviour, one sacrifice for all (vv. 5-6).

If the gospel is to have success in our time, we must undergird it with prayer (vv. 7-8).

PRAYER

Father, help us to pray more intentionally, keeping in mind the things You have taught us in our lesson today. Help us to be more sensitive to the needs of others, both physical and spiritual. We trust You to create circumstances that will help bring about the answers to our prayers that are according to Your will and for Your glory. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Prayer comes first.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-16 in anticipation of a very important lesson on leadership qualifications.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday, January 2: Paul Prays for the Philippians (Philippians 1:3-11)

Tuesday, January 3: Pray Without Ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:16-22)

Wednesday, January 4: God Hears Our Prayers (1 Peter 3:8-12a)

Thursday, January 5: A Parable about Praying (Luke 18:1-8)

Friday, January 6: Pray for Your Enemies (Matthew 5:43-48)

Saturday, January 7: Pray for Everyone (1 Timothy 2:1-7)

Sunday, January 8: Prayer is Powerful and Effective (James 5:13-18)

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

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