

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 September 2018

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 0 0] As we continue then our progress through the subject or study in Timothy that we've been looking at, you'll remember if we cast our minds back a few weeks, how we began by looking at Timothy himself, the person, and how Paul first called him to follow with him and after him and share in his ministry, and how he had been steeped in the scriptures from his childhood, how his grandmother and then his mother became believers and how he, with his upbringing and knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, although his father was Gentile, was Greek, yet still he was, as it were, primed and prepared, like a field plowed and prepared and ready for the seed to go into it.

And he was ready in that sense. And Paul took him with him. And then we saw in the opening parts of chapter one and the second part in what Paul is now seeking to instruct his younger lieutenant in as he takes charge of the church in Ephesus, where, of course, as we were looking at previously, among the Lord's the evening, Ephesus is the centre of Diana worship and a lot of occultic practices and a whole heap of immorality that goes with that too.

So, remembering that, yes, this is truth that is applicable to all the church and throughout all the ages, it is being written in the first instance of Timothy in his particular situation.

And in some ways, although the opening verses seem to us just normal, well, it's good and right to pray for, you know, our parliaments and our king and queen and so on, this would have been, in those days, to a certain extent, revolutionary.

I exhort that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men. Okay, fair enough, mankind in general. But this is for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

[1 : 5 8] Now, that may seem surprising. It's fair enough, you might think, if you've got a Christian monarchy ruling over you, or if you've got what we might think of as democratically elected leaders who would safeguard our freedoms and privileges and so on.

But remember that the first century Christians were living under pagan Rome. And pagan Rome was a persecutor of Christians. So if they're being encouraged to pray for kings, that is, for the local regional governments, whether for Herod or for, you know, Pilate or for Caesar himself, they are being told to pray for those who, holding positions of authority, will frequently use that authority to persecute believers.

If this is not an instance of not only turning the eye on the cheek, but praying for those who hate you and spitefully use you as Jesus taught his followers to do, you know, nothing else is.

This is a direct instruction that you are not to respond to the civil authority as it responds to you. You are not to treat them as they treat you, but when they persecute, when they pass their pagan laws and when they seek to discriminate against or to persecute the church or to persecute Christians, you're to pray for them.

Keep praying for them that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. Now, the sense of these two terms, quiet implies without, on the outside, you're quiet in terms of going about our daily business and being left in quiet and peace to do it.

[3 : 29] And peaceable, that implies within, so that we have peace within, peace in our spirit and soul and are able to concentrate and work on the things of the Lord in all godliness and honesty.

And godliness, remember, is part and parcel of what Paul is seeking to convey and to underline the importance of. Faithfulness, godliness, humility.

That is part of the message he is seeking to underscore to Timothy here. That the man of God, the leader of the church, as we'll see in the next chapter, of bishops and elders and deacons and so on, they must likewise be men of humility and godliness and faithfulness.

Men and women together in worship, faithfulness, godliness, humility. This is the thing that is being emphasized throughout. And it is part of our humility and godliness as opposed to human nature to pray for those in authority over us, not simply for their overthrow, not simply for the destruction of pagan kings, but that they would be changed.

That they would be guided by the Lord to rule wisely, to do justly, to be faithful in terms of their dealings with their subjects. Not to be tyrants, but to be given the wisdom and grace of God.

[4 : 47] Because God can and does make use of pagan rulers. You know, it was pagan Rome that eventually, through Constantine, the emperor, was converted to Christianity.

At least outwardly, whatever may have been in his heart. Which lifted the restrictions on Christians and which enabled then the gospel to really spread further like wildfire throughout the rest of the Roman Empire.

It became almost part and parcel of the Roman Empire culture, Christianity. Some people would say that wasn't a good thing, but it certainly transformed the message and the power and the freedom to practice it.

If a magistrate, a king, if a prime minister, somebody in authority is put in place who is a Christian, or who becomes a Christian, what a powerful good that can be.

If you've got a parliament that is stopped with Christians, what a powerful good that can be. Of course we are to pray for those in authority over us.

[5 : 48] Kings and all that are in authority over us, that we may lead a quiet on the outside and peaceable within life in all godliness and honesty. That is gravity in the sight of man.

We are to be faithful. We are to be diligent. Christianity does not make you into sort of little rebels who are going to have a demo on the street corner and going to demand the overthrow of the government and say, we want this, we want that, we want the next thing, down with the government, down with this, down with the next thing, and so on.

As though this is our God-given right to protest and overthrow the powers that be there. As Paul writes to the Romans chapter 13, the powers that be ordained of God. So if we resist the power, we resist what God has put in place.

That doesn't mean it's necessarily good. But whether it is good or bad, we are to pray for those in authority over us. Because the kingdom of which we are ultimately citizens is not of this world.

Jesus could easily have overthrown Pilate and brought in twelve legions of angels. He could easily thumb his nose at those who are trying to crucify him. He could have brought in his own earthly and kingly power. That's partly what Satan tempted him to do.

[6 : 57] When he showed him all the kingdoms of the world, said, I'll give you all this. You're going to have all this earthly power. All the legions, all the armies, all the splendor, all the grandeur and wealth.

It can all be used. Bring in your messianic kingdom. Be this kind of king. Think of how easy and good it would be. And if Jesus had succumbed to that and overthrown Pilate and brought in his earthly kingdom of righteousness, Satan would have sat back and rubbed his hands in glee and thought, yes, now they're doing it my way.

But it is not the way of the prince of this world that we are to follow. It is not the old human nature that desires to have what man wants in his self-centered old nature.

And this will deal with us as we go on through the chapter. Man wants to be man-centered. He wants the world to be man-centered. He wants things to be ordered according to what will make sense to him as opposed to what God may command.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior to pray for kings and all those in authority. Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

[8 : 11] Now that doesn't mean everybody's going to be saved, obviously. We know that everybody does not end up being saved. So when it says who will have all men to be saved, it means that he wants to offer salvation freely to all.

And when he offers it, it is a genuine offer. It's not a trick. It's not God saying, come, come and believe and be saved. I'm not really going to let you into error. He means it when he offers it.

It is a genuine, complete offer. Just as in chapter 4, verse 10. For therefore we both labor and suffer a goch, because we trust in the living God who is the Savior of all men.

Especially of those that believe. Well how can we be the Savior of all men and then not everybody's saved? If he's our Savior, surely they're saved. If you have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, surely they're all going to be saved.

No, it's in the context of us. If he is the Savior of all, especially of those that believe, it means that he is the only Savior. He's the only Savior for all mankind.

[9 : 10] There is only one Savior. For, as we read, there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. There are not multiple different gods.

Not many different gods of different characteristics like the pagans believed in. So even to make this statement that there is one God and one mediator between God and man, that's revolutionary in the multi-god society that Ephesus was and that Rome was and that Greece was and that all the pagan backgrounds, Egypt and all the other ancient nations were, they believed in a whole pantheon of gods.

It was like sort of a celestial East Enders with all these different kind of gods infighting and interrelated to each other and all having inappropriate relationships with each other and all having sort of arguments and fights and so on.

This is what the ancients thought of as the gods. One sort of big kind of squabbling heavenly family with a sort of supreme God that was vainly trying to keep control of it all.

There aren't all these gods, Paul says. There's one God and one mediator between God and man. Therefore, he is the saviour of all because there's only the one.

[10 : 24] There's no other saviour. For every person on the face of this planet, there is one saviour. He's the saviour then of all, especially of those that believe, whom he actually does save.

But he's still the only saviour that's going to save anybody, whether they believe or not. There's not lots of different options. There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

So yes, the Lord invites freely. He doesn't withhold his salvation from anyone. He wants him to come to the knowledge of the truth. But of course, he won't do it, most of them, because man prefers his own authority.

Man prefers his own nature. Man prefers to be in the place of God. And the great thing about all the false gods of the ancient world and all the false gods nowadays is that because they're not real, you can make of them whatever you like.

You can offer a sacrifice here, a pinch of incense there. You can say, oh yeah, this is the God I follow, so I don't need your Christianity. I don't need this gospel. I've got my own religion. I've got my own gods. I'm a spiritual person, even if I'm not really sort of overtly religious.

[11 : 33] These are the gods I follow. You can make them whatever you want. You say, well, I worship now and then with my little altar, my little shrine, or I don't bother to worship at all. And the gods, I worship, are okay with that. You make them whatever you like, because they're not real.

So you can say what you like, you can do what you like, and you still remain spiritually untouched. It's like a field that has the potential to be plowed. You say, oh, it's my field. I can do with it whenever I like.

I've got my plow in the shed. I can take it to it whenever I like. I just don't. And I can scrape it over the top of it now and then, but it won't turn any soil. There's no seed planted in there. It's just going to weeds.

It's just going to rack and ruin because it's not being worked, because you don't do anything with it. Your soul, in the same way, is left untouched by all the false gods and false prophets of the world.

They cannot redeem. They may entertain for a while. Like all the things that we give our time and our energy to and our leisure activities and our hobbies and our career and so on.

[12 : 30] They may entertain for a while. They may keep us fascinated. They may use up all the best years of our lives and all the energy and intelligence that the Lord has given us because it's all being brained off to die and not being focused on the one thing that can save.

There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.

And again, the sense of the ransom for all is the ransom for all who will be saved. And if he's the ransom, there isn't any other. He gave himself. He didn't send somebody else.

He didn't, you know, he didn't require somebody else to do it. And it's not against his will. Poor little Jesus isn't being forced by the nasty father to do something that he didn't want to do.

He gave himself. As he himself said in John's account of the gospel, you know, I lay down my life. I have the power to lay it down. I have the power to take it up. He is God, the son.

[13 : 32] Nobody can compel him. The only thing that compels him is the love of the father, which means that he desires to be the father's will and desires to work this salvation who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.

Another word ransom is the same as the Hebrew word goel, which means kinsman, redeemer. And it's from the old Hebrew idea in the Old Testament that the nearest male relative, if you maybe were short of money, you wanted to sell a field, or somebody was widowed and somebody else was meant to marry her and raise up children for the deceased, then it was the goel.

The kinsman, the kinsman, who was the nearest male relative, as Boaz was in the book of Ruth, except that he found there was somebody nearer. And so in order to establish his own claim, he had to first of all meet with the nearer kinsman and get him to relinquish his claim so that Boaz could take the part of the kinsman, redeemer, who could be the ransom.

The goel is the Hebrew word which means kinsman, redeemer, himself a ransom, a redeemer, to be testified in due time, whereunto I'm ordained a preacher and an apostle.

This is the message that I give, that I bring. I speak the truth in Christ, and why not a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity for truth. The truth I'm bringing to them is that what other people think about all this multiplicity of gods, there's only one God.

[15 : 03] One mediator between God and the man Christ Jesus. And what he does in our lives is he transforms those lives. He overcomes the angry enmity of human nature that squabbles and fights.

This is why the ancient pagans thought of as all the gods in the heavens supposedly squabbled and fought and engaged in inappropriate relationships. Because that's what men and women did down below.

That's what pagans did on the earth. They thought that's what the gods must do in heaven. No, God is completely different from what we are like in our fallen condition.

Jesus said, he that had seen me had seen the Father. In other words, if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. Jesus is the perfect man. The perfect human being who made an image of God, as we all are, of course.

Fulfilled all of God's laws and commands to perfection. And having filled that perfection, laid down the perfection as the perfect sacrifice upon the cross.

[16 : 10] Which because it was a divine sacrifice is sufficient for all the sins of all who would trust and believe in him. One God, one mediator between God and man who would have all men to be saved.

And as we said in chapter 4 verse 10, there's the saving of all men, especially of those that believe. That's all you have to do is believe in him. Is put your trust in him. You think, well it can't be that easy.

In a sense it is. Except that it's not easy. For our human nature to let go. And to surrender our salvation to God. We like to hold on.

We like to have control. That's the old human nature. I must have control. It must be down to something I do. I've got to be center stage. I've got to be the one who decides what I will do.

No. You've got to let go. And let God take charge of your life, your spirit and soul. This is what Paul is obeying as a preacher of. A teacher of the Gentiles.

[17 : 09] And faith and verity and truth. I will therefore, because of that, that men pray everywhere. Remember he's opened this chapter talking about prayer.

And who it is appropriate to pray for. And why it is appropriate to pray for them. And the God that we are worshipping. And what he is like. The ransom that he has given.

The humility that he has shown. This supernatural. As opposed to merely natural. Character that is his. There is only the one soul. He says pray.

Men pray everywhere. Lifting up holy hands. Without wrath. And doubting. Obviously if you doubt the one whom you're asking. Then you're not going to receive anything. You know as James says.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. But there shouldn't be wrath or disputing. In our minds and in our hearts. When we pray. Otherwise our prayers will be hindered.

[18 : 05] If we think of what Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount. We read in Matthew 5. 23 and 24. For example. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar. And there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee.

Leave there thy gift before the altar. And go. And sorry. And go thy way. First be reconciled to thy brother. And then come and offer thy gift.

In chapter 6 verse 15. Still in the Sermon on the Mount. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses. Neither will your father forgive your trespasses. The old nature is to be laid aside.

There's not meant to be enmity. Not meant to be resentment. One against another. And sometimes. And I've heard this done. Prayers can be turned almost into a political manifesto.

People can stand up and read perhaps prepared prayers. That are really just. Stake us. Oh Lord. We repent of all the things we've done. This, this, this and this. And it's really just a.

[19 : 05] How bad this political regime. Or this government. Whatever it is. Because look at all the things they've done. And we repent of that. But it's not really we repenting. It's just a slag off of whoever happens to be in political power at the time.

That isn't prayer. That's an abuse. Of the office of prayer. Because there's not meant to be that wrath and doubting. Yes if you want to pray for those in authority.

And you don't like what they've done. Then pray that their hearts will be changed. Pray that they will have wisdom and guidance and grace. But that which is a communication with the almighty.

On behalf of others. Is not just for our own petty agendas. In this world. I will therefore that men pray everywhere. Lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.