

SERMON: PRAYER A TOP PRIORITY

1st Timothy 2:1-8

(1) I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men. (2) For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (3) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; (4) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; (6) Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (7) Wherefore I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. (8) I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Introduction

There is a fable that is used quite often in the business world. It is really a tragic story with a challenging meaning. No one knows who told it first. Some people think it is one of Aesop's fables, but it is not. By the way, Aesop was a Black guy. That's right, Aesop was a brother. In this fable the sheep kept meeting continuously to discuss ways to prevent the wolves from eating them. Unfortunately, the sheep could not come up with a workable solution. There was a lot of discussion at every meeting, but no real solution was ever presented. Each time they met there was one less sheep in the group because it had been devoured by the wolves. Finally, there were no meetings because all the sheep had been slaughtered and eaten by the wolves. The meaning: meeting and discussing ideas without a strategy, know how, or willpower to solve a problem is futile and will lead to destruction. Companies that could not find solutions to the problems of a changing business environment went out of business. I am sure you can name more than a few.

Let me add my preacher's spin to this little story. Many of us now feel like the sheep in this fable. There seems to be no solutions to the problems our society is facing. We discuss them, but it seems we cannot come up with real solutions. All of the talk show personalities talk a lot, but still leave us with opinions, but no solutions. We can easily feel helpless and hopeless. These feelings of helplessness and hopelessness can easily turn into anger and even violence. Of course, violence is not the answer. Somebody said we are engulfed by the Ps: pandemics, politics, polarization, protests, power, and sometimes poor policing. This fable is only a fictitious story, but the sheep had an option that was not in the original story. (Remember, I am a Baptist preacher.) They should have prayed. So let's add another p to the list-let's add prayer. Let's take

some advice from the oral history of our ancestors: “When you don’t know what to do, you ought to know what to do and that is to pray to the Living God.”

In chapter one of this letter, Paul gives a laundry list of problem facing the church. Then in chapter two, from which we get our text, he tells Timothy to make sure the church makes prayer a top priority. Churches do a lot of great things, but nothing is a substitute for prayer. We must not overemphasize other meritorious activities to the exclusion of prayer. Let’s face it: there are some problems that the only positive thing we can do about them is to pray. We must pray and keep the faith. Paul was telling Timothy, in no uncertain terms, to make sure the church he was pastoring was a praying church. Now let’s do a mini-exegesis of this passage.

Exposition

1. Prayer Is Simply Communication with God.

(It Is Simple Yet Profound).

(It Is A Great Privilege).

2. Prayer Takes Various Forms- Paul Lists Four Here.

- (A) Supplications- Address Urgent Needs.
- (B) General Prayers- A Wide Range of Subjects-
That Well-being Will Continue.
- (C) Intercession-Prayers for Others.
- (D) Thanksgiving-Appreciation of Blessings.

3. Prayer Is Mediated By Jesus Christ (Verses 5 & 6).

(He Qualified To Mediate Because He Died On The Cross).

4. Prayer Has Conditions for Effectiveness (Verse 8).

- (A) No Sin (Holy Hands) (The Right Relationship with God).
- (B) No Anger (No Wrath) The Right Relationship With Each Other.
- (C) No Doubt .

5. Prayer Works-It’s Just That Simple.

(James 5:16)

Closing Thoughts

Prayer is based on the work of Jesus Christ as Savior and Mediator. As the God-Man, Jesus Christ is the perfect Mediator between the Holy God and His failing children. Since there is only one God, there is the need for only one Mediator; and that mediator

is Jesus Christ. Since the basis for prayer is the sacrificial, mediatory work of Jesus Christ on the cross, prayer is a most important activity of a church congregation. Not to pray is to slight the Cross! To pray only for ourselves is to deny the worldwide outreach of the Cross. To ignore lost souls is to ignore the Cross. We are to pray for "all men." No one is excluded when we go before the Lord. Neither bigotry nor bitterness is an excuse for erasing people from our prayer list. Regardless of whether we like them or not, we need to intercede for them. I will close with the much quoted words of the late Peter Deyneka, Sr., "Much prayer, much power! No prayer, no power!" Give God Glory! Give God All the Glory!

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