

## **First Timothy: The Household of God**

Global Prayer in the Local Church

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### **GLOBAL PRAYER IN THE LOCAL CHURCH** **1 Timothy 2:1-7**

Well, if you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to 1 Timothy 2 and continue in your worship guide, just pulling out the notes that are on the inside there that will guide our time together in the Word tonight.

While you're finding 1 Timothy 2 and pulling out your notes, let me just thank you for praying for Heather and for me, and for Heather's family this last week. It's been a long, long week. Heather's mom had battled a variety of health issues just for years and had been in the hospital for a couple of weeks. Just a few weeks ago, she had gone to the hospital with kidney failure, and she'd been there for a couple of weeks but had been released from the hospital on Monday a week ago, and things seemed to be going better. She was on dialysis. Heather and the boys traveled over there to Atlanta to be with her at home for a few days, and it was last Friday...early Friday morning when Heather called me and told me that her mom was being rushed to the hospital from their home. They got there and realized that her mom had just suddenly experienced massive bleeding in her brain, and by Friday night, the prognosis was really not good. Then, Saturday night her mom ended up passing away. It's been a long week in a variety of ways.

Just, maybe, three brief takeaways from this last week that I think will lead us into 1 Timothy 2. First takeaway: I am so thankful for the body of Christ. You know, it's when you walk through difficulty and trial that you see what it means to be faith family. I'm so thankful, specifically, for this body of Christ, and Heather and I both just want to thank you for the way you've prayed, the way you've loved and supported us in just different ways. Some of you came over to the visitation at the funeral home last Tuesday night. Some members from Brook Hills were at the funeral on Wednesday. It was just so comforting, even as I'm preaching this funeral...not an easy funeral to preach...just to look out and to see brothers and sisters who I know who are praying for me and praying for people to come to Christ in that funeral. It was just so encouraging, so thank you for being the faith family that you are. So, that's takeaway number one. I'm just thankful for the body of Christ.

Takeaway number two: I am so thankful for the salvation of Christ. Death is real, and heaven and hell are real. If this had happened a couple of years ago, I shudder to think of what this last week would have been like. Some of you know that it was just a little over a year ago that my mother-in-law came to faith in Christ and was baptized just a couple of months ago. I missed a Sunday because I was in Atlanta baptizing her, and just to see precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints and to know that last Saturday night when the jaws of death entangled her, that the life of Christ empowered her and today she lives.

My mother-in-law's life was a textbook in cultural Christianity. So, I want you to follow with me real closely here, because I think there might be a word here for maybe many people in this room. We live in this church culture where we just assume...it's dangerous; it's particularly dangerous when it comes to funerals, and there's this assumption that well, as

long as somebody went to church and at some point said they believed in Jesus, then we just say, "Okay, well, it's good. We know they're in heaven." That's not true. The Bible never says that if you go to church, you will go to heaven when you die. The Bible never says that you have intellectual belief in Christ, that you will go to heaven when you die. The Bible says even the demons believe in God. They don't go to heaven.

The reality is, a couple of years ago, my mother-in-law would have said to you that she was a Christian. She had an intellectual belief in Christ and had gone to church, but what happened a little over a year ago...and I shared this at Secret Church in the spring when we were talking about regeneration...is that this intellectual belief in her head a little over a year ago, took hold of her heart. God changed her heart, her life and her desires, awakened her soul, and she knew Christ as her Savior and her Lord and that overflowed into everything. There is a huge difference; there is an eternally huge difference, between intellectual belief in Christ and authentic love for Christ, and we live in a church culture that just almost encourages us to give casual approval to Christ, intellectual adherence to Christ, church attendance to Christ, none of which the Bible says saves. What saves is heart-trust in Christ as Savior and Lord and following Christ with your life.

So, I would just ask the question...obviously, at least for tonight, you're a church attender. I would just ask the question of every single person in this room. Get through the fluff; get through the cultural fluff of cultural Christianity. Does Christ have your heart? Is Christ your life? For when the day comes, and you're in a hospital bed and the prognosis is not good, what's going to matter ultimately, ultimately, on that day, what's going to matter is not whether or not you have gone to church or have intellectual belief in Christ, or been a good person in this culture. What's going to matter on that day is whether or not your heart and life are trusting in Christ as Savior and Lord and King. It's what matters, and the testimony of my mother-in-law's life is, especially over the last year, that Christ is worthy of so much more than intellectual belief and casual approval. He is worthy of your heart and your life, and He can be trusted with your heart and your life in good times and in bad times. That God can be trusted.

This is the story of her life, that God can be trusted. When you get...when you have diabetes, when you get diagnosed with breast cancer, that you can trust Him with neuropathy, and you can trust Him with degenerative eye disease, and you can trust Him when you have multiple surgeries on your finger, and you can trust Him when you have kidney failure, and you can trust Him when massive bleeding takes over your brain, because in the middle of it all you know Him. It's not superficially, but authentically, you know Him, and you know His strength, and you know His grace and His peace and you know His victory, when this body can take it no more and your heart stops beating and you stop breathing. In that moment, you know His victory because you've united your life with the man who conquered death. When you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He is with you, and you realize it is absolutely true: "To live is Christ, and to die is gain." It's gain.

However, don't miss it: dying is only gain when Christ is life. So is He life? There's no more important question in this room tonight. Maybe...maybe God has brought you here even just simply for this word. That tonight, in this room, something eternal might happen in your heart. Go beyond a world of religious deception and cultural acceptance and surrender your heart and your life to Christ as Savior and Lord and know that life is Christ and dying is gain. So, good.

I said brief takeaways. That wasn't brief, but that was important. One, I'm thankful for the body of Christ. Two, I'm so thankful for the salvation of Christ, and then, third take-away: I walk away from this last week all the more emboldened to lead, shepherd, love this body of

Christ in a way that we together proclaim the salvation of Christ in Birmingham and to the ends of the earth.

You know...and I know many of you have walked through similar circumstances where you have lost someone very, very close to you, but if you have, you know that death is a perspective changer, isn't it? In one moment, there are things that are consuming your mind and your schedule and your emotions are just tied up in, and you're worried about and consumed with, and then something like this happens, and you realize, "Wow, it's just really not that important." There are things that are ultimately important.

We need perspective changers like that in our lives. We need to be reminded. We are a busy people. All of us in this room, we are a busy people. You have so many things on your to-do list, things going on, details in your life and things that your mind and your emotions are consumed with...will be consumed with...this week. I just want to encourage us, even tonight, as we prepare to go into this week, to change perspective a little bit. To realize what is ultimate in our lives and what is ultimate for us as a church, to realize that there are people this week in Birmingham, surrounding this building...there are people this week in Birmingham who will die, and some of them will die and enter into everlasting suffering in hell without Christ.

So, to realize that you and I know that Christ has conquered death, that He has made a way to eternal life, and, therefore, to realize what is ultimate this week; what's ultimate in our lives is making this news known to people who are dying all around us. It's what's ultimate in the church. Even in the church, of all places, we can get so consumed; we can begin to think, "Oh, it's important to the church is even cushioning our comforts and prioritizing our preferences." No! What's ultimate in the church is we are here on a mission. We have a purpose this week in Birmingham and a purpose in the world, a cosmic purpose that has eternity at stake for people's lives.

I read a parable last week when I was preparing for this message. I hadn't even planned on using it actually last Sunday, but I was brought back around to it. Let me read it to you:

"On a dangerous seacoast, notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving station. Actually, the station was merely a hut, with only one boat. But the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the turbulent sea with little thought for themselves. They would go out day and night, tirelessly searching for those in danger as well as the lost. Many, many lives were saved by this brave band of people who faithfully worked as a team in and out of the lifesaving station. By and by, it became a famous place. Some of those who had been saved, as well as others along the seacoast, wanted to become associated with this little station. They were willing to give their time and energy and money in support of its objectives.

"New boats were purchased; new crews were trained. The station that was once obscure and crude and virtually insignificant began to grow. Some of its members were unhappy that the hut was so unattractive and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided. Emergency cots were replaced with lovely furniture. Rough handmade equipment was discarded and sophisticated; classy systems were installed. The hut of course was discarded and torn down to make room for all the additional equipment: furniture, systems and appointments.

"By its completion, the lifesaving station had become a popular gathering place and its objectives began to shift. It was now used as sort of a clubhouse, an attractive building for public gatherings. Saving lives, feeding the hungry, strengthening the fearful and calming the disturbed rarely occurred. Fewer members were now interested in braving the sea on life-saving missions, so they hired professional lifeboat crews to do this work. The original goal of the station wasn't altogether forgotten, though. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations. In fact, there was a symbolic lifeboat preserved in a prominent room with soft, indirect lighting, which helped hide the layer of dust upon the once used vessel.

"One dark, stormy night, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick and obviously from distant shores. The station was in chaos. The event was so traumatic that the people contracted for outbuildings to be constructed so future shipwrecks could be processed with less disruption. At the next meeting there were strong words and angry feelings, which resulted in a division among the members. Most of the members wanted to discontinue the station's lifesaving activities as being unpleasant, and a hindrance to their normal social life. Some insisted however, that rescue was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But the latter were ignored and told that if they wanted to keep life saving as their primary purpose, they could begin their own station down the coast. Which they did.

"As years passed, the new station experienced the same old changes. It evolved into another club and yet another lifesaving station was begun. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that coast today, you will find a large number of exclusive, impressive buildings along the shoreline, owned and operated by professionals in members who have lost all involvement with the saving of lives."

So, if I could just remind us tonight, brothers and sisters called The Church at Brook Hills, we have a job to do. What is ultimate this week? What is ultimate this week is about leading people from death to life all over this city. What is ultimate for us is about leading people from death to life all over this world. The adversary will constantly try to distract us with things to consume our thoughts and our emotions in our lives and in the church with things that are not ultimate. So, I encourage us to constantly rise above and see the ultimate and live for the ultimate, so that people all over Birmingham die happy in Christ and go to be with Him forever and ever and ever. It's what we've got breath for.

## **The Initial Exhortation...**

So, that leads us right into this text: 1 Timothy 2:1. Okay, two weeks ago, we were in 1 Timothy 1, and we saw Paul say, "Okay, first and foremost, church at Ephesus, Timothy, guard the gospel. Celebrate the gospel. Fight for the gospel in your lives and in the church." So, we kind of laid a foundation, gospel foundation. So, what we're going to see from this point on, starting in 1 Timothy 2, is just exhortations; practical application. Once we guard...as we guard the gospel, fight for the gospel in our lives and in our church, how does that affect the way we live? So, I want you see Paul's initial exhortation based on foundation

of the gospel. What is the first practical thing he tells the church to do with this gospel foundation? Look at 1 Timothy 2:1:

*"First of all, then [first of all...it's the first thing, Paul says], I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 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."*

### **Pray to God for all peoples.**

So, here it is, okay? Paul, what's the first practical application you would give to us based on guarding the gospel as a foundation in the church? First thing, Paul says...initial exhortation: pray to God for all peoples. So, what Paul says to Timothy, to the church at Ephesus, and by extension to us, is pray. Offer "*supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings*." Four words that, basically, in the end, mean pretty much the same thing. "We get the point, Paul. We're supposed to pray. We need to pray."

So, you're on a life saving mission, church, and you're surrounded by people in Birmingham who don't know Christ, surrounded by people in the world who don't know Christ. What do you do? Where do you start? You pray. It's the easiest thing to do, right? You don't have to get out of bed to do this one. You don't have to get dressed and nice and go somewhere. You don't even have to talk to people. Just talk to God. Paul says pray. Offer prayers, supplications. You want to have influence on people who are destined for an eternal hell around you? You want to have influence on people all around the world, even kings and rulers in high positions? You want to have influence? Pray. You want your life to count for what God is doing among people all around you? Pray. Pray. Pray.

Now, who do we pray for? Paul says, "Pray for every kind of person." Paul says, "*I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people*." Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that Paul is saying, "Pray for every individual person in the world." Instead, the picture is to pray for all kinds of people. He's writing this letter to Christians at Ephesus. Some of them were Jewish Christians. Others were Gentile Christians, and we know from the book of Ephesians, there was some tension between the two. The picture that Paul's constantly pointing to is both. Pray for Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

There were Gnostic heretics in Ephesus who were claiming that salvation was limited to a group of religious elite, a selective group. Paul's undercutting that all throughout this letter. He's saying, "No, you pray for all people not some selective group of people that our prayers are to be filled with diversity." You pray for all kinds of different people: Jews and Gentiles; rich and poor; different ethnicities; different nationalities; different backgrounds; different demographics. Let your prayers be diverse. Don't let your praying be elitist. Don't let your praying be nationalistic.

Now, I want you think, at this point, about your praying. Just pause for a second. Is there diversity in your praying? Are you praying for all kinds of people or are you praying mostly for people just like you? I want to encourage you, individually, diversify your praying. I encourage us together. That's why when we have prayer of intercession at the end, we pray. It's almost like a list of all kinds of different people, because we're commanded...most

of the picture here is even in public worship. We're intended to pray. God commands us to pray for all kinds of people. So, pray for Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists. Pray for this nationality and this nationality and this nationality. Pray for this people group and this people group and this people group. May there be a picture of diversity in our praying for people in Birmingham, for people around the world. To embrace all kinds of people in the world in our praying.

A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian Missionary Alliance...he was said to wake up in the morning, fall on his knees, clutch a globe and just begin to weep in prayer. Oh, that that would be the picture of our lives all throughout the week, and then our life together as a church when we come together. That we are clutching, embracing the world in prayer.

All kinds of people, including praying for leaders in high positions. Now, this is really fascinating when you think about it, because Paul is writing this under the reign and rule of Nero, a Roman emperor, who was persecuting Christians. In fact, at that time, the reality is there were few, if any at all, Christian leaders in high positions. There were not Christian kings, Christian rulers, for the most part. So, Paul is saying very intentionally to pray for these leaders. Now, obviously we're not in the exact same situation. We don't have an emperor over us who is seeking our demise and wanting to kill the church, kill Christians. At the same time, the exhortation is clear here. Really, the command is clear that we are to pray, as the church, for leaders in high positions. Are you praying for President Obama? When was the last time you lifted Vice President Biden to the throne? Now, I know that many watch *Fox News* and find policies and positions that they don't agree with in certain political rulers. What if we spent that kind of time interceding for those same rulers? To pray for Mayor Bell in Birmingham? To pray for Governor Bentley of Alabama? For Senator Sessions and Senator Shelby? Other Congressmen and women? We are commanded to pray for our leaders like this. Pray for leaders in high positions.

Now, what do we pray for? Paul doesn't say, "Pray that God would blast Nero into utter oblivion." Don't pray that. What do you pray? You pray *"for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way."* So, pray for peace amidst persecution. Pray for peace amidst persecution. Pray for these kings and these rulers, and I think what Paul is saying here is really kind of multi-faceted. On one hand, Paul is saying, "Pray for these leaders who have the authority to lead in a way that brings about peace. To provide these leaders that have an authority to bring an umbrella of peace for the church to thrive and to live out the gospel freely, not in opposition against the state but under protection of the state."

This is a picture even in the first century. We see "*Pax Romana*"...Roman peace...and through Roman peace there were roads built and trade routes established that, literally, paved the way for the gospel to be able to spread quickly to different areas. However, there is a picture in which, obviously, in the context where we live right now and in a context of freedom, that you and I have the privilege tomorrow of living out the implications of the gospel freely amongst people around us. That's a good thing.

So, we need to pray, especially for our brothers and sisters who are in settings where that is not the case, and leaders in those sorts of settings. To pray for leaders in North Korea. To pray for leaders in Egypt where I was a few months ago, where peace is in jeopardy and freedom is taking shape. What would that look like for the church? We pray for leaders there so that the church can live peaceful, quiet, godly, dignified lives there. So, there's that kind of picture: praying for peace amidst persecution.

At the same time, knowing that there are some leaders who will continue to persecute Christians. You think about it, in praying for those leaders, praying for those persecutors, the picture is, obviously, in praying for them, the Christians will live in a way that responds to the persecution in peaceful, quiet, godly, dignified ways. It was John Chrysostom, one of the early Church fathers, who talked about when you are praying for someone, it makes it a lot harder to hate that person. It makes it a lot harder to despise that person, to react negatively against that person. When you pray for someone, you begin to love that person.

So, there's a picture here. Pray for peace amidst persecution and pray for salvation for persecutors. As we're about to see in the whole context of this passage, part of our praying for all kinds of people, including leaders, is praying for their salvation. Praying that they would...to borrow language from verse four..."*come to the knowledge of the truth*" of Christ. So, in all this, what Paul is saying, first and foremost to the church, is pray. Pray. Pray. Pray. Pray for all kinds of people. Pray for peace amidst persecution. Pray for salvation amidst persecutors. Pray for leaders in high positions. May this be evident in our church, and may this be evident in our lives, this kind of praying.

**The progress of the gospel in the world is dependent on the prayers of God's people in the church.**

Why? Theological motive...well, we'll get to that in a second. Let me not forget this part. The picture Paul is painting from the start of 1 Timothy 2 is clear: the progress of the gospel in the world is dependent on the prayers of God's people in the church. I want you to see this. This passage, what we're reading here, is one of the great evangelism and mission passages in all of the New Testament. The whole picture is...we're about to talk about this...God wanting people everywhere to know His salvation. So, God tells His people, "You pray for this and know that your praying has a direct effect on the progress of the gospel throughout the world. Oh, pray like this for those who are lost right around you."

The old English pastor, Richard Baxter, put it this way. He said, talking about prayer, he said,

"Let your heart yearn for your ungodly neighbors. Alas, there is but a step between them and death and hell. Many hundred diseases are waiting, ready to seize on them and if they die unregenerate, they will be lost forever. Have you hearts of rock that cannot pity men in such a case as this? Do you not care who is damned as long as you are saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace. Do you live close by them? Or do you meet them in the streets or work with them or travel with them or sit and talk with them and say nothing to them of their souls? If their houses were on fire, you would run and help them. Will you not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell?"

See them. See the people. See the faces that you work with; you live next to. Stand in a shopping line next to this week. These are souls that are destined for eternal suffering or eternal satisfaction, for hell apart from Christ or heaven with Christ. Pray for them. Yearn for their salvation. Call out to God for them.

## The Theological Motivation

### **We pray because God desires the salvation of all peoples.**

Why? Theological motivation behind all of this: why do we pray like this? Three reasons: One, we pray because God desires the salvation of all peoples. We pray like this because God desires the salvation of all peoples. This is key. Our praying for the world is motivated by God's passion for the world. Our praying for the world...it's not in your notes, no extra charge...our praying for the world, motivated by God's passion for the world. *"This is good [verse three], it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior who desires all people to be saved."* When you begin to pray for all kinds of people in the world to be saved, your heart is coming in line with the heart of God Himself. God desires all kinds of people to be saved. God desires Jews and Gentiles to be saved. God desires rich and poor to be saved. God desires Democrats and Republicans both to be saved. God desires Hui and Arundo\* and Baloch and 11,000 other people groups to know His salvation. When you pray like this for the salvation of all kinds of different people, you pray in light of the heart of God, and it's good. This is pleasing to God, the Savior who desires all of their salvation.

So, be careful though, in this passage, to realize...okay, what this passage does not mean is that all individual people will be saved. When the Bible says, God *"desires all people to be saved,"* some people take that text and twist it into universalism, this belief that, "Well, because God desires all people to be saved, and God always gets what He desires, then all people will be saved." That's definitely not what this passage or what the Bible is teaching. Scripture is clear that we're saved by grace through faith in Christ. That salvation comes only to those who trust in Christ by His grace to save them. So, this passage is not saying that, in the end, every single person is going to be saved.

At the same time, this text is also not saying...does not mean...that God's will has been thwarted. Some people say, "Okay, well, if God desires all people to be saved and not all people are saved, then clearly God is not in control of everything in the world." That's not true either. Again, Scripture is clear from cover to cover that God is sovereign over all things and His will cannot be thwarted. Now this is...we don't have time to dive deep in here, but just quick review. Remember, we've talked about how when the Bible talks about God's desires and God's will, that it talks about God's will in different ways. There are points when the Bible talks about God's declared will...what He declares, what He says in His Word. Then, the Bible, at other points, talks about His decreed will...basically, what happens in the world. Those are not always the exact same.

Let me give you an example. Let's assume tomorrow that I were to lie to someone. I'm not planning on it. I don't want it to happen, but let's just assume for a second, hypothetically, I lie to someone tomorrow. Is my lying to someone tomorrow in the will of God? Is it in the will of God or out of the will of God? Well, it depends, right? When it comes to His declared will, what He has said in His Word, He has said clearly, "Do not lie." I am out of His will. I am disobeying His will. At the same time, if I were to lie to someone tomorrow God would not be in heaven thinking, "David, I never saw that coming. Who knew?" He knew! He knows all things; ordains, in a sense, all things. God is sovereign even over the worst things. God had said, "Do not murder." That's declared will. He was sovereign over the very murder of His Son on a cross. He knew it was going to happen and ordained it to happen.

Now, there's mystery there. There's a lot of mystery there when it comes to our actions and God's sovereignty, but know this: God's decreed will cannot be thwarted. So, what this text is simply saying...all that to bring back...what this text simply means is that God loves all peoples. That's the point. God desires the salvation all kinds of people. 2 Peter 3:9, *"God is*



*not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance...*" Ezekiel 33:11 God says, *"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, I desire that the wicked turn from his way and live..."* Because God desires the salvation of all peoples, we pray for the salvation of all peoples. Know this: when you pray for your lost friends and lost neighbors, when you pray for your lost enemies, when you pray for lost Hui in East Asia and Baloches in Central Asia and Arundo in North Africa, when you pray for all of these peoples, you are praying to a God who loves those peoples and desires their salvation. You're not trying to cajole Him into saving. He loves...desires their salvation. So, that's why we pray like this. This is why it's good, and it's pleasing to God our Savior to pray like this.

### **We pray because God deserves the honor of all peoples.**

Second reason, we pray because God, not just desires the salvation of all peoples, but God deserves the honor of all peoples. Verse five says, Paul says, *"For there is one God."* Oh, that seems like such a simple statement, but it is such a significant statement. There is not a god over here for this people and another god over here for this kind of people, and another god over here for this kind of people, and another god over here for this kind of people. All kinds of different gods for all kinds of different people. No, there is one God over all kinds of people. This is Isaiah 45:21-22. God says, *"...there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved..."* *There is no other god besides me...turn and be saved by me.* There is only one God who is Savior, one God who is worthy of the praise of all peoples.

See this: monotheism drives missions. We talk about mission every week around here, why? Because there's one God who deserves the praise of every single person in Birmingham, Alabama; one God deserves all their praise. There's one God who deserves the praise of 11,000 different people groups on the planet, and we want to go to every single one of them because there's only one God who deserves their honor, and there's all kinds of people worshipping all kinds of different gods, and they don't deserve their honor. One God deserves their honor.

See this: worship is the fuel of world praying. So, we gather together tonight to say this together: one God, our God, is greater, stronger, higher than...I'm not going to sing it...He's higher than any other, right? So, we sing. We sing it triumphantly because we know He's greater, stronger, higher than any other, and when we sing that, when we believe that, we pray like that. God show the nations, show every kind of person in Birmingham that you are greater, stronger, higher than any other. Worship fuels that kind of praying. That's the heart of the Lord's Prayer, right? "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; make your name known as holy. Your name. Nobody else's name. Your name known as holy in all the earth."

Worship is the fuel of world praying, and then get this: worship is the goal of world praying. This is what we're praying toward. We're praying night and day, week after week. We clutch the world, embrace the world in prayer, anticipating the day when all kinds of people will gather around His throne and give Him the honor that He is due. That's what we're after in our praying. What we're after is worldwide worship, and it's coming, but we'll get to that at the end. It's coming, but that's it.

Let's go ahead and get to it, just a little bit. When we pray like this, we pray with anticipation. So, we pray for all kinds of people. We pray for the Baloches in Central Asia, the Hui in East Asia, the Arundo in North Africa; these people groups that we've adopted that are unreached with the gospel. We're to change that by the grace of God and the power of God, we want to be a part of changing that because what we're after when we pray for these people groups, we're after the day when there will be Hui and Baloches and Arundo

people gathered around the throne, singing the praise of God. That's what is driving us in our praying because we believe God deserves the honor of all those people. You see the theological motivation here? That's not all.

**We pray because Christ died for the rescue of all peoples.**

The third reason why we pray for all kinds of people is because Christ died for the rescue of all peoples. *"There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all."* Ransom. What a great word. Literally, it means the price paid for the release of...release or rescue of...a prisoner or hostage. This verse...one commentator said, this verse...these two verses, verses five and six, are "the Bible in miniature and the gospel in essence."

So, here's the picture: there is one God. He is holy in all His ways, and He is just in all His judgments. Here we are, men and women, sinful in all our ways and deserving of all His judgments; separated from God by an infinite chasm. There is no way for you and I on our own to be reconciled to this God. We need someone to bridge this gap, to be a mediator and this is where Jesus comes in. Christ is unique in who He is. He is a mediator. What makes Him a mediator is that He is able to identify with both parties. He is fully able to identify with God. He is fully God. He is divine. Uniquely able to identify with God, and at the same time, He is fully able to identify with man. He is the man Christ Jesus. Like us in every way, yet without sin. He is uniquely able to bring these two together. That's what a mediator does.

Last night, I'm outside with our two boys. It's getting dark, and we're searching for bugs. Problem is we have one flashlight. Two boys. That's a problem because they both want the flashlight. They're arguing over the flashlight. Enter the mediator who is able to hear from both, to represent both to the other, to bring this kind of picture together, to come to a compromise.

This is Jesus. Jesus is standing in the middle. Fully God; fully man. Unique in who He is, and unique in what He did. So, keep going here. Thinking about a mediator. He gave Himself as a ransom. A ransom? He paid a price. What was the price He paid? He...well, the payment for sin is what? Death. Ransom price: death. This is a price...follow along here...that man alone owed. We alone deserve to die, right? We're sinners. We alone deserve to die, but the reality is...the reality is we can't take the price upon ourselves, the infinite wrath of a holy God. Only God could do that on our behalf. Man alone owed this price. God alone could pay this price. God alone could bear the infinite wrath due sin. So, how could God do that? In Christ. Fully God, fully man, paying the price for man as God. That's good. Bible in essence. This is it. Think of it.

My mother-in-law, a sinner, took her last breath, and because she trusted in Christ the mediator, the eternal payment due her sins had been paid by her Savior. The payment had been made and so, last Saturday night, rescue was ultimately made.

Jesus is unique in who He is and what He did. I had to put this in there too. He is unique in what He does, because He's not just our mediator in the past, through what He did on the cross; He's our mediator in the present at the right hand of the Father, right? He lives as our mediator. To think of it...think about this when you're praying: Jesus is living, at this moment, even in our worshipping; He is our mediator. He is at the right hand of the Father. He is interceding for us. He is the means by which we approach God in worship; we approach God in prayer. He is living as our mediator, reigning as our mediator, continually, constantly, moment by moment. He is our mediator, and He is leading us on mission.

## The Obvious Implication

### **As we pray to God for all peoples, we preach the gospel to all peoples.**

That leads to the obvious implication. Paul just springs into it in verse seven. He says, *"For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle...a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."* Here's the deal. As we pray to God for all peoples, we preach the gospel to all peoples. "As I pray," Paul says, "I preach." Paul is talking here, specifically, about God's call in his life, but the reality is, what he's talking about here has application to all of our lives as followers of Christ in this room.

Here's the deal: the more we pray for all kinds of people, the more we realize that God desires the salvation of all peoples. That God deserves the honor of all peoples. The more we realize that Christ died for the rescue of all peoples, the more we are compelled to live for that which is ultimate, to preach the gospel, to share the gospel with all peoples. We herald the cross of Christ to every kind of person. Some of you...some translations say, *"For this I was appointed a herald..."* The reason I use that word, is it's just a great, ancient word from the ancient world to describe someone who would make a grand announcement, whether it was an athletic event, or whether it was an announcement of victory in war, a herald would come out and shout to the crowd the news.

Brothers and sisters, you are heralds this week. You're heralds of the greatest news in the world. Shout it, and tell people they don't have to be afraid of death because Christ has conquered death on their behalf and they can live forever with Him. That's better to talk about than Alabama or Auburn football this week, huh? This is good news! It's what we herald; it's what we declare; it's what we proclaim, and as we herald the cross of Christ, we teach the commands of Christ. This is what we do, church. This is what we do. We pray for all peoples, and then we preach, and we teach the gospel to all peoples until...

## The Coming Conclusion

### **We pray with confidence and we preach with boldness because we know...**

Okay, this is where we'll close out. Turn with me over, real quick, to Revelation 5:8. You have to see this. This is where all of this is headed. I want to give you a glimpse of heaven. We've been talking a lot about heaven this last week. It's always a challenge to talk with a five-year-old and a three-year-old about funeral homes and cemeteries and heaven and there are all kind of questions that spring from that. Some of you are familiar with some of those questions, and just be encouraged that your pastor sweats in the middle of a lot of those questions as well, because I don't know what to say in response to some of them, but good questions.

I want to give you a glimpse of heaven in Revelation 5:8. Listen to this. We're kind of coming in the middle of Christ taking the scroll that holds the consummation of the kingdom of God. It says, *"And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb..."* This is Christ, the lion-like lamb in Revelation 5. *"...Each holding..."* [each of these elders was holding] *"...a harp, and [listen to this] golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."*

Now there's...different people debate exactly what the saints' prayers are being lifted up here in this scene, but most believe it's probably, both, prayers of saints in heaven...you go

to the very next chapter, and you see martyrs who are praying before God in heaven, those who've died and gone before, lost their lives as a result of their faith in Christ. However, most also believe that included in this picture are the prayers of saints on earth who have longed for and prayed for the coming of God's kingdom.

So, just make the tie here. So, we pray for the salvation of all peoples and the glory of God over all peoples and the coming of His kingdom. Prayer is being lifted, *"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you [what?] ransomed [same word from 1 Timothy 2] people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'"*

This is it. This is it. This is ultimate. It's why we do what we do. We pray with confidence for all peoples to come to a saving knowledge of Christ. We pray with confidence, and we preach with boldness to all peoples. This week, preach with boldness. In our lives, this year, go into all kinds of different places on short-term mission trips. Some of us going midterm, some of us moving overseas. Go to all kinds of places in Birmingham and beyond Birmingham, preaching with boldness, because we know that one day our mission will prevail. Every kind of person, individuals from every tribe and language and people and nation will be ransomed, guaranteed. They will be ransomed. Our mission will prevail, and our mediator will be praised. That's eternal guarantee. That matters forever. So pray, preach, live, and save lives because this is what matters.

\* NOTE: Arundo is an adopted nickname for a people group in the Horn of Africa whose identity must be kept secure. For more information about the Arundo people, visit [The Church at Brook Hills website](#).

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