

Pleasing God through particular prayer

1Timothy 2:1-8

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Introduction Once upon a time...a father went off to work each day and would come home telling his two boys a bit of his day. Day after day he went off to work and came back happy. This went on year after year. One day the neighbor came to the boys and asked them a question. "What does your father do for a living? What's constantly on his mind? What does he set out to do each day? What pleases him? What does he desire? (a bit nosey huh?) The first boy looked up with signs of sheepish uncertainty and said, "I don't know". The second boy with greater confidence or so it seemed raised his brazen face and retorted, "I don't care".

Tell me, though both boys did not know what made their father happy, which one was more of an honor to the father? The first boy who demonstrated ignorance but had a soft face? Or the second boy who demonstrated arrogance and had a hard face?

[The point] Though you may be here with little understanding of what is on God's mind, let no one today when asked "what does God desire? What is He concerned about? What pleases Him"? say, "I don't care". Rather, if we are here and don't know the answer to that set of questions, that's okay. May the message today walk you through a passage of Scripture that leads you to the heart of God. We do this so that by His grace we will want what he wants, we will desire what he desires, we will be concerned about what He is concerned about, we will be pleased with what pleases him.

(a brief recap of Pleasing God series)

This morning we look at another activity pleasing to God. In 1Timothy 2:1-8 we notice that what pleases Him has to do with prayer; that is, a particular type of prayer. To think carefully over this passage **in order to** care about what God cares about (i.e. in order to desire what He desires / want what He wants / to be pleased with what pleases Him) we will do three things.

- First, think together over the *type of prayer* that pleases God (v1-4)
- Next, explore the basis or *reason for this type of prayer* (v5-7)
- Finally, be challenged by an *exhortation to participate in this type of prayer* (v8)

[PRAY]

The type of this prayer

v.1-4

First, what is this particular prayer with which God is pleased? A God-pleasing type of prayer is:

An every-possible-way-for-evangelistic-activity type of prayer.

Let me try to explain.

Its fervor**v1**

In light of chapter one and how the false teachers were drawing attention to themselves (cf. Acts 20:30) and promoting anger and quarrels, Paul urges them to do something first of all. He says to the church in Ephesus,

“I urge you that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people”. He insists that Timothy and the other elders stop the erring elders from teaching error - (it appears) a Judaism that was narrowly focused on just a few.

Rather, the church was to look outward and pray for all people. Paul defines or describes this type of prayer using four plural nouns – *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings*. I suppose we could make a word study and find helpful distinctions between each. But as Gordon Fee notes it is probably Paul’s way of talking about the quality of this type of God-pleasing prayer. That is, by using four words to teach on prayer he piles up word upon word to describe the richness or intensity of this type of prayer. It is an activity of the church that must preoccupy the church. It is nothing casual. It is not periodic. This type of prayer is so rich and regular that it took the Apostle four words to say one word – pray!

Thus we could say when defining this God-pleasing prayer that it is a “in every-possible-way” kind of prayer.

Its focus**v2a**

Having noticed the energy and consistency of the prayer, Paul now discusses for whom this prayer is to be made. Its focus is understood in the first part of v2.

Having just said that this fervent prayer is to be made for “all people”, Paul modifies and specifies what he means by “all people”. V.2a says, “for kings and all who are in high positions”. The people for whom Paul wants the church to pray are governing authorities. For “kings and all who are in high positions” points us to the proper objects of this type of prayer; namely people as high up as the emperor in Rome and down to the local magistrates and town clerks of Ephesus. We do not know as of yet for what Paul wants the church to pray. But we know for whom he wants prayer – governing authorities concerned about the public square and responsible for making decisions over civil order (see Acts 19:23-41).

Let’s review. We are in the midst of our series call *Pleasing God*. We want to understand what pleases him and by faith carry out this type of lifestyle. This morning we’ve come to a text that specifically tells us what pleases God. We see that it is a particular type of prayer. We have been examining the features of this prayer and notice that it is both fervent and focused. Now we come to the prayed for results. What is the desired effect of this type of prayer in which the whole church is to be participating? For what is the church to pray?

Its outcome**v2b**

Notice in the second half of v2 Paul begins with the word “that”. This tells the reader that what follows is the desired effect of this type of prayer. We read in

the middle of v2 “*that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way*”. There it is; the desired outcome of this type of prayer.

But what does he mean by “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life...”? Certainly, we can cancel out the thought that Paul wants the church to avoid trouble and pain and difficulty in order to lead a private, tidy, non-suffering life. Paul would never point God’s people toward that type of lifestyle. See 2Timothy 1:8 as Paul calls Timothy to “join him in suffering for the gospel”. 2Tim.3:12 tells the church that “indeed, all who desire **to live a godly life** in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”. Certainly he does not mean by “peaceful and quiet life” anything of the sort. So what does he mean?

What helped me much in understanding this passage was to think about where this church was located and what happened in this city when Paul preached the gospel. As Paul launched his 3rd missionary journey, he traveled through Galatia and Phrygia to make it to the great port city of Ephesus. Much Spirit-caused ministry occurred. There were many conversions. There were great public demonstrations of repentance and faith in Christ. And for two years Paul taught on the gospel of the Kingdom so that men and women; Jews and Greeks – all heard of the gospel throughout Asia. Now here’s the question: How did the people who did not appreciate the gospel take this? Listen to the account in Acts 19.

28 When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s companions in travel. 30 But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. 31 And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. 32 Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”(Acts 19:28-34)

When God’s people take God’s gospel and take on the idols of the culture and the idols of the heart we notice a threat to social order. When disorder and civil unrest increase public evangelistic activity will decrease.

To carry out church-wide evangelistic activity something needs to happen. What allowed the gospel to continue publicly in Ephesus is seen as we continue reading in Acts. Picking up where we left off in Acts 19 we read:

*35 And when the **town clerk** had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius*

*and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, **the courts** are open, and there are **proconsuls**. Let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.” 41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly. 20:1 After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said fare-well...*

(Highlight the theme) What quieted the riot and allowed the speakers of the gospel and the church in Ephesus to remain are governing authorities. Are we able now to connect the dots and interpret 1Timothy 2 and its mandated particular prayer?

The God-pleasing type of prayer found in this passage is:

An every-possible-way-for-evangelistic-activity type of prayer.

The church is to pray in such a way that the church's evangelistic activity can continue in public due to the governing authorities ruling for the church's freedom to do so. This positive response to the church's activity is due the church praying for those in decision-making positions. God listens to the prayers and intervenes so that the church can preach the gospel in public to make disciples of the city. Do you see? The God-pleasing type of prayer found in this passage is:

An every-possible-way-for-evangelistic-activity type of prayer.

Its expression

v3-4

Continuing through the paragraph we arrive at v3-4 that tells us why this type of prayer is pleasing to God. In v3 we come to a couple of pronouns (this, it) that point back to the prayer that we observed in v1-2. This type of prayer (every-possible-way-for-evangelistic-activity) is good and pleasing to God. Here's the question: Why?

V.3-4 tell us what God is like & what He likes. His pleasure, his desire is for the salvation of people, people like 1:8-16 – all people without distinction He desires to save; people in high positions, people in low positions, morally sound and morally unsound, rich and poor, educated and not, people of all colors and religions. God sent Christ into the world to save sinners (1:15), to ransom people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev.5:9). This is the kind of God he is. This is what is on his mind. This concerns him. If you were unclear over what the Father in heaven does and desires here's the passage to clear up any questions.

How these verses function in Paul's thinking is simple. He tells Timothy and the church to pray in this type of way because it is an expression of God and dovetails into his activity.

The Reason for this prayer

v.5-7

Having noticed four features of the God-pleasing prayer; its fervor, its focus, its outcome & its expression, v.5-7 introduce us to the basis (or reason for) this type of prayer. *The church is to pray in such a way because the church has an exclusive message with an inclusive mission.*

Part one – Its exclusive message

v.5-6

The first part of the reason for the God-pleasing prayer can be seen in the exclusivity of the message. The gospel makes plain that there is but one God and that there is but one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.

One God

v.5a

(Isa.43:10; 45:22) = Gen.1:28; 12:3; Col.1:6

Living in a pluralistic society, we must participate in what pleases God as seen in this message. We live among people living for themselves, living as though there is no God, dabbling in Greek mythology, dazzled with new age theologies, saying their definition of God cannot be challenged due to the fact that it is their own personal definition. Beloved, we must obey this call from the Apostle in 1Tim.2 because we are monotheists! There is but one true God and people do not know the One true God. We must hear afresh what God says through Isaiah: “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. *FOR* I am God and there is no other”. The church is to pray that we can live an evangelistic way because we have been entrusted with the gospel.

One Mediator

v.5b

(John 14:6; Acts 4:12) = Rev.7:9; 21:7

The second side of the first part of the reason for obeying the command to pray a certain way is found in the second part of v5. There is one God & there is but one mediator between God and men. His name is Jesus! Why should we pray this certain way of v1-4? People can stomach monotheism in our culture (for the most part). But when we drop the hammer that “Jesus is the way the truth and the life – no one comes to the Father except through Jesus”. Now the war is on¹. You will be tagged with two logos: intolerant and arrogant. The exclusivity of our message that there is one God and there is only one way to this one God will incite anger.

Why are we to pray in this certain way? It is seen in the message.

¹ My sense is that we do not experience much of this war in part because we conveniently define “godly living” as private and pietistic moralism. We do not cheat on our taxes or spouses. We stay clear of health-harming substances. We smile and say hi to people. And all along we domesticate and neuter the gospel into a pleasant little puppy that is nice to have around and doesn’t threaten anyone. We take this “gospel” and nurture our inner world and shape our outer world and become godly...like a mannequin.

Part two – Its inclusive mission**v.6-7**

But not just the message is the reason for this type of prayer. In v6-7 we notice the mission. The second part for the reason for the God-pleasing prayer can be summarized in the inclusivity of the mission. Three times in this passage Paul uses the word ALL. This is not to be understood as “all without exception” as though Christ died to save every human being. Rather this all is to be understood as “all without distinction”. Paul was sent to the nations where he would meet a variety of people and their ideologies. God’s ransom mission has its eye on every group of people from whom he saves his elect. Thus, we are to have no criterion, no hidden standard by which we measure candidates for the gospel. We do not to look for the poor or rich or athletic or educated or underprivileged or good looking or tattered; no, we have this exclusive message that is to go out indiscriminately to “all” types of people for the salvation of God’s people.

Why are we to pray in this certain way? Think: It is seen in the mission.

The exhortation to this prayer**v.8**

To hear of a God-pleasing prayer, to understand both its content and its basis is good. But to hear the Lord calling each of us today into this God-pleasing prayer is better. V.8 summons us to action. Here, we come to the exhortation.

For every local church

Paul makes full circle in v8 by picking up v1 and making the exhortation crystal clear. Pray in this certain way is the exhortation. He starts off this exhortation by taking the reader back to Mal.1:11 I believe to make the point that this message is to ring out from every local church. God’s plan for the gospel is to ripple throughout the earth to make a name for himself in all the earth. This message is to be both embraced and proclaimed from every local church; whether she is in the South Pacific or the South Pole; whether the church is located in Brazil or Burma, North Korea or North America, China or Chattanooga – the evangelistic activity sustained by this particular prayer is to ring out with a clarion call for repentance among all the earth.

With elder leadership

And this type of local church living is to be modeled and led by biblically qualified elders. That’s how I understand the subject of this prayer is “the men”. It seems that Paul has the qualified elders in mind here as he exhorts both them and the entire church to carry out this certain type of prayer.

Sustained by the gospel

Finally, to modify the command he says that we are to pray “lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling”. The lifting of holy hands is a word picture throughout the Bible for genuine worship. No hypocrisy and no duplicity are to be found in the activity of this command. I mention that this prayer is to be sustained by the gospel due to the observation that the erring elders are teaching a false gospel that produces anger and quarreling (cf. 6:4). To hear Paul say that we are to pray “without anger” tells me that this type of prayer is trained by and sus-

tained in the genuine, solid, healthy good news of great joy – the gospel (see 1:8-17).

Conclusion

In conclusion, to understand and participate in a life of pleasing God we have said that this passage tells us:

- That in every possible way we are to pray for governing authorities that we as the church can participate in free and fruitful evangelism.
- That we do this due to both our message (the **one** true gospel) and our mission (to **all** types of people).
- That every church is to participate in this.

In response to the Lord due to this passage what will you do?

- Pray this type of prayer from the pulpit and in our Flocks?
 - For missionaries in dangerous places
 - For Chapel evangelism in public places
- Practice this type of prayer at home?
 - Thanking God for the season of societal peace
 - Asking God for opportunities to speak the gospel

Paul's call to Clearcreek Chapel and her Flocks is to be a hotbed of evangelistic activity. This will make for obvious prayer requests that reflect this passage. As we take the gospel to our hearts we will want to take it to the streets. As we do this more and more trouble will arise. Our only solution is to make much of God in prayer – asking him for safety – trusting in him for civil peace – begging him for conversions.

Are you able to see now why this type of praying is pleasing to God?



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Introduction

Heading

➤ **Heading**

Heading

Conclusion