

THE EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL ON THE GATHERED CHURCH

Stonebrook Sunday AM, 8/1/2021, Matt Heerema

- Good morning Stonebrook!
- Sorry I can't be with you there this morning
- I had planned to be, and to give a "state of the Stonebrook union" message
- But God had other plans... and a few members of my house have COVID, in one case even through the vaccine, so in consultation with our physician, we decided it would be best, even though I have no symptoms, and have been vaccinated, to be present there with you this morning, so WELCOME TO MY OFFICE!
- The message I had planned for this morning will be given at the August 21st Core meeting instead,
- We've just wrapped up our series on Proverbs, and next week we will begin a series through Luke's Gospel account which will last us the whole ministry year! I'm excited for that series. It will let us really slow down and soak in the life and ministry of Jesus. Which I think is exactly what we need as a church coming off the last 18 months.
- This morning, I'd like to spend our time in 1 Timothy, so if you'll all turn with me there, we'll be looking at chapters 1&2.
- I'm calling this morning "The effect of the gospel on the gathered church."
- In light of the good news about Jesus and what he's done, what should we do as a church
- And Paul's answer that we're going to focus on this morning, is that we should PRAY as a church!

So let's take a look at first Timothy.

First I'll set the stage, the context of the letter.

The Apostle Paul had an interesting problem on his hands. He had spent three years with the church he started in Ephesus, living with them and instructing them night and day, imparting to them the whole counsel of God.

After this he wrote them a definitive letter reminding them of The Gospel and instructing them in how they were to conduct themselves.

Now, just a few short years later, just as he had predicted, some people in the church had started teaching a false message, straying from the simple message of God's Mercy and Grace toward us through Christ that Paul taught.

They went beyond this message into speculation and myths, guessing about things that God hasn't told us. Some were laying down rules to follow as a way of obtaining favor with God.

They were likely teaching these things in Jesus' name and using Paul's name to back it up, and some may not have realized that they were straying from Paul's teaching.

Paul advocates "Sound Doctrine" and holds that scripture, rightly taught, always lines up with what he calls "The Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed God."

Sound doctrine always gives Jesus all the credit for doing what we could never do without Him doing it for us: living a life worthy of God, and paying the debt we owe God for our sin against Him.

Paul reminds Timothy of this:

1 Timothy 1:12-14

"I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

Do you see this? Though he was a blasphemer, persecutor of the church, and opponent of God, Jesus Christ looked at him and judged him FAITHFUL! He received MERCY for acting without faith and knowledge of truth. By grace, Jesus poured out faith and love to Paul that Paul did not have! We are finally able to love ONLY because Jesus loved us!

1 Timothy 1:15-17

"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Paul was appointed by God to steward (protect and maintain) this message of Mercy and Grace. And Paul is now passing this off to Timothy, reminding him to stick to God's Word, not to stray into his opinion or guesses about things that aren't written, and to always remember that scripture is ultimately about this Gospel of God's Glory, shown through his Grace, and that the goal of this message is "love that issues from a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith." He warns that if you fail to keep this in view, you will shipwreck your faith. Paul writes this letter to

Timothy to remind him of these things and to teach him what it looks like for people to live in light of this truth.

FIRST OF ALL, PRAY!

The primary effect this message has on the church is prayer.

1 Timothy 2:1-4

First of all, then, 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.

Paul urges that, in light of this message of mercy and grace that we pray all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people. This message is an “equal opportunity” message! Whatever gender, race, or social status we are to pray for them all.

He gives a specific example, as a sub-point, of those with authority and influence, and I will say simply that we are to pray for them! Not that God would thwart them, but that we might have peace and order in which to conduct our life and mission. Even those who actively oppose Christ are acting, as Paul did, ignorantly in unbelief.

We are told to pray for all people, according to God’s desire for them to understand this truth:

1 Timothy 2:5-6

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.

Notice here: There is only one God, for all people.

I wonder if we tend to have in the back (or sometimes front) of our minds that different cultures have different Gods. We think that different people have their way of connecting with the generic “god/being/power/force/thingy” and that’s fine for them, but this simply is not true. God, the God, the Only True God, loves them, died for them, and wants everyone to know this. This is the message we’ve been entrusted with. A weighty charge! And so we are to pray, pray, pray.

Paul goes on to explain how we ought to conduct ourselves when we meet together to pray.

PRAY WITHOUT ANGER

1 Timothy 2:8

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

Men, you are to pray.

Lead in prayer. Initiate the praying. Coordinate prayer times. Lead the charge in praying. If there is some sort of ministry going on somewhere, get a group together and lay down cover fire for them by praying. This is your God-ordained, manly duty. Set the pace here. Set the tone here.

Lift up holy hands. Don't just go through the motions. Don't just feebly mumble half-hearted, unfelt, half-thought through prayer. Reach up with your hands to heaven, where God is, and cry out to him! But lift up holy hands... Pray without anger or quarreling.

Jesus said something that Mark recorded in his gospel that stops me dead in my tracks every time it comes to mind.

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." **Mark 11:25**

And again in Matthew's gospel:

"So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." **Matthew 5:23-24**

Just before this Jesus says that remaining angry is the same as murder! So who do you need to forgive right now? Who do you have a long-standing war with. Who are you just done with and refuse to deal with any longer? Who is in this place toward you?

THE BEAUTY OF GOOD WORKS

And now to the women...

1 Timothy 2:9-10

Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness--with good works.

Sisters, those of you who profess to worship God, hear me: This is not a fashion show. Your goal should not be to attract attention to yourself by the way you dress and carry yourself. You know how easy it is to turn heads by what you wear. If this is your goal when you carefully pick your outfit for Thursday night or Sunday morning, you need to repent. This is not about your comfort or preference. This is about others around you. Dress yourself in a way that will help minimize distraction for another praying man or woman. Do not draw people's attention away from Christ to yourself.

Instead, God directs you to "good works." This is what you ought to be noticed for. There are thousands of possibilities! Jump in with both feet!

SUMMARY

In this passage, Paul reminds his young protege of the glorious gospel news, and when he speaks of how the church should respond to this news, he says: "PRAY."

All kinds of prayers, for all kinds of people.

Pray without arguing.

Pray without calling attention to yourself.

Rather, pray, calling attention to Christ, and his amazing work for his people.

APPLICATION

- **Pray in groups**

- Like the passage says.
- Attend prayer meetings (men's ministry is praying Friday AM before work)

- **Pray solo**

- Jesus would often go away to secluded places to pray

- **Pray loudly**
 - Pour out your complaints to God
- **Pray silently**
 - It does not have to be out loud. God knows your every thought. Direct them toward him throughout the day in prayer
- **Pray extended prayers**
 - It is good to spend a lot of time praying.
 - Don't pray repetitively, or think that longer prayers are more spiritual or rack up more points
- **Pray short prayers**
 - Called "breath prayers" - my favorites "Lord, Help!" Or "God help me know what to do here..."
- **Pray improvised prayers**
 - From the heart, off the cuff, top of your mind. Don't worry about getting the words right, or accidentally saying the wrong thing. Romans 8 says "we don't know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes on our behalf" - one of my favorite biblical promises.
- **Pray from a book**
 - I find a lot of help in prayer books. Sometimes I don't know what to say, and these can give me words that I have a hard time finding.
 - We don't want to pray by "rote" (thoughtless, mechanical prayer), but that doesn't mean we can't pray "written" prayers. :) Two different words.
 - Always pray from the heart.
- **Pray songs**
 - Often I am better able to connect to prayer emotionally when I sing them. The songs we sing on Sunday or Thursday, or whenever you meet and sing together, or even if your quiet times with a CD, or if you are fortunate enough to be able to play an instrument: these are prayers!
- **Pray the Psalms**
 - The best prayer book, and the best songs to pray are actually given to us in the scriptures. The Psalms.
 - Did you know you can pray through the Psalms? Let's close by doing that.

I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.

One generation shall commend your works to
another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.

On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.

They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.

They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and merciful slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.
All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your saints shall bless you!
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
and tell of your power,
to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.
[The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.]
The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.
The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.

The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

Psalm 145