

A Study on 1 Timothy

Week 4 | 2:1-7

Overview | Chapter 2 begins a new section in the letter.

Chapter 1 began and ended by focusing on guarding the gospel from error and false teachers. The next section of the letter begins in chapter 2 and goes through chapter 3 verse 13.

In this section Paul focuses on the church and how it should reflect the gospel in contrast to the legalism and ungodly lifestyle of the false teachers.

It can be broken into three subsections:

1. 2:1-7 – A re-focus on the gospel
2. 2:8-15 – The importance of godliness for believers
3. 3:1-13 – The importance of godliness and character in church leaders

Using the shipwreck illustration from the end of chapter 1, Angus Macleay summarizes these three sections this way (*Teaching 1 Timothy*, p. 77):

1. 2:1-7 – The church must be steered into the deep waters of the gospel.
2. 2:8-15 – The crew must be encouraged in behavior pleasing to the Lord.
3. 3:1-13 – New leaders need to be appointed who will faithfully steer the ship.

Structure of 2:1-7 and the use of the word “all” |

This section flows very smoothly with the command to pray for all people which is rooted in God’s love for His people.

1. 2:1, 2 – Prayer for **all**
2. 2:3, 4 – God wants **all** to be saved
3. 2:5, 6 – Christ died as a ransom for **all**
4. 2:7 – Preaching to **all**

What does Paul mean by the word “all?” There are a few options:

1. It means each and every person in the world (Romans 3:9-12)
2. It means all of the people of a particular group (2 Peter 3:9)
3. It means all types of people – a representation of people from every nation, language, ethnicity, social class, Jew and Gentile, male and female, etc. (Matthew 28:19).

Here in 1 Timothy 2, the context leads us to option 3. (*We also know from other passages that option 1 cannot be what is intended here.*) There is no conflict between what God desires and what actually comes to pass. His desire is for people from all nations to be saved. This is at the heart of the Great Commission and this is part of the issue with the church in Ephesus – they had become inward focused and were neglecting the free offer of the gospel to sinful men and women, Jews and Gentiles alike.

Question to consider: How often do you use the word “all” or “everyone” to mean every single person in the world? (Context matters!)

“...for the Apostle simply means that there is no people and no rank in the world that is excluded from salvation; because God wishes that the gospel should be proclaimed to all without exception.” – John Calvin (*Commentary on 1 Timothy*, p. 54)

Prayer for All | 2:1-2

How should the church pray? (*This is certainly instructive for individuals but the focus in these verses is on corporate prayer as a church.*) These four aspects of prayer are not a formula for our prayers but rather a description of how our prayers should be informed.

- Supplications – requests made to the God of all abundance
- Prayers – Whereas this could be a general term for the other three aspects in this list, it is unique in that prayers are only offered to God. “It emphasizes the element of devotion, drawing near to God with reverence to enjoy fellowship with him, not merely to obtain some benefit from him!” – W. John Cook (*Let’s Study 1 Timothy, p. 30*)
- Intercessions – Praying on behalf of someone else – in this case for the salvation of those who are lost
- Thanksgivings – Rightly focusing on the riches of God’s mercy and grace toward us and his creation

For whom should the church pray?

- For all (kinds of) people
 - The gospel is not contained to one country, one people group, or one language.
- This includes those who are in positions of power and authority (Kings, rulers, etc.)
 - There are no areas of society that are either too lofty or too far gone that the power of the gospel cannot reach.
 - Remember, this was written during a time where the emperors were often violently opposed to Christianity.

For what should the church pray? (*This is not a comprehensive list.*)

- For the rulers to rule in such a way that reflects God’s law
- For rulers and all others to come to faith in Christ
- For the church to reflect godliness in the lives of its members (peaceful, quiet, godly, dignified)

The focus of these prayers was both outward (the salvation of all) and inward (the growth in godliness of the church members).

God Wants All to be Saved | 2:3-4

This should be encouraging to us. God is in the business of saving sinners. It’s why Jesus came (1:15). And the makeup of the people that God has gathered, and is gathering, consists of all types of people.

How are people saved? Through the knowledge of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This has a few implications:

- The primary mission of the church is to preach and teach the truth of the gospel.
- The church must not be distracted by many other “good” things.
- The church must protect against false doctrines so that the truth of the gospel might be clear.
 - This is how believers grow in godliness.
 - This is how unbelievers hear the truth and are saved.

Christ Died as a Ransom for All | 2:5-6

The heart of the gospel is that the one true God sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to die on our behalf and to free us from the penalty of sin and death.

- One God – in contrast to the polytheism of Ephesus
- Mediator – a go between sinful mankind and a holy God
- The man – the mystery of the incarnation is one of the great triumphs of the gospel
- A ransom – Jesus paid the price for our lives – his life for ours (substitutionary atonement)
 - Did Jesus die for everyone or just for the elect?
 - Limited atonement (definite atonement) – Jesus died for, and ransomed, those whom God chose for salvation before the foundation of the earth.
 - Matthew 20:28 – “Ransom for many”; John 10:11 – “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Preaching to All | 2:7

Because the message of the gospel is central to the mission of the church, Paul proclaimed that it was for this very reason that he was appointed a teacher and an apostle.

- This is in contrast to the self-appointed false teachers.
- This mission included preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and not just the Jews.
- Essential to the mission is both prayer and preaching. God is the one who builds his church, grows his church, and preserves his church. And he entrusts the work to his people.

So What? |

Resource List

Teaching 1 Timothy by Angus Macleay (Primary Source for class)

1 Timothy by Philip Graham Ryken

Let's Study 1 Timothy by W. John Cook

1-2 Timothy & Titus by Philip H. Towner

Commentary on 1 Timothy by John Calvin

ESV Study Bible