

One Way • 1 Timothy 2:1-6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The Life-Saving Station*

1. On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occurred, there stood a life-saving station.
2. The building was just a hut really, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members of the station kept a vigilant watch over the sea - and with no thought for themselves went out day and night to search for the drowning
3. Many of those who were rescued were so grateful they joined the work of the station, pledging their time and money to it's work.
4. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The life-saving station grew.
5. In time, some of the members became concerned that the station was so crude and poorly equipped.
 - a. they felt that since they spent so much time and energy there it ought to be more comfortable
 - b. and with better equipment, those rescued would recover faster
 - c. so the emergency cots were replaced with cozy beds and the hut was enlarged and remodeled
6. With the improvements, the station became a popular hang out for its members; who began to invest *more* time and money in it
7. It became *even more* comfortable and well-equipped, and soon, fewer and fewer of the crews were willing to leave it to go out in the boats on the cold and stormy seas to rescue the perishing
8. One night a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the few lifeboats who went out returned with dozens of cold, wet, half-drowned people
 - a. they were dirty and bloody, with their clothes ripped to shreds by the barnacle covered rocks
 - b. the station was in a chaos!
 - c. most of the members were upset that their meeting had been so rudely interrupted by this pack of disheveled and needy survivors
 - d. they determined that outbuildings needed to be constructed where the life-saving task could be processed with greater efficiency and less mess to the part of the station they used.
9. Eventually a rift developed between the people who still went out in the boats and those who hadn't been in a boat in years.
 - a. most of the members wanted to *discontinue* the station's life-saving activities because they were unpleasant and only got in the way of their normal social life
 - b. others insisted however, that rescue was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a "life-saving station."
 - c. but this minority was ignored and told that if they wanted to keep saving lives, they could begin their own station down the coast – they did.
10. But just 20 years later, the same thing happened all over again in the new

- station and another split occurred.
11. Today, if you visit that seacoast, you will find a dozen very impressive life-saving stations
 - a. one of them is even built in the *shape* of a life-boat
 - b. and most of the people who are members wear a charm of a little boat on a chain around their neck
 12. Sadly, shipwrecks still occur in those waters, but most of the people are lost. [1]

B. Primary Focus

1. One of the *primary* tasks of the Church is *evangelism*
2. The Church IS a Life-Saving Station
3. When we gather here on Sundays and Wednesdays, or at any other time, it's so that *together* we can sharpen our focus on God
4. When we leave here, we launch out into this dark and stormy world to rescue the perishing.
5. One of the highest expressions of *worship* IS *evangelism*; because saving of the lost brings *glory to God*
6. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this in our text this morning . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-4

- ¹ Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,
 - ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.
1. This letter was written to Paul's young protégé, Timothy who had been Paul's traveling and ministry companion for several years.
 2. When Paul had to leave the city of Ephesus and travel to the west into Macedonia, he left Timothy behind to deal with some issues troubling the church there.
 3. Paul says that he wrote this letter to help Timothy understand how the church should operate. [2]
 4. In chapter 1, Paul told Timothy specifically what he, as pastor, was to do – and that was to teach and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 5. Here in chapter 2, Paul tells Timothy the *priorities of church-life*.
 6. In vs. 1&2, he puts the priority squarely on *prayer* – specifically, prayer for the salvation of the lost.
 7. In v. 1, when he writes that he urges “**first of all**” – he doesn’t mean, first in sequence, as though the first thing we ought to do when we gather is pray
 8. “First of all” refers to *priority*; first in order of *importance*.
 9. What *kind* of prayer Paul means here becomes clear in the next verses . . .
- ³ For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
 - ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

10. Like the people in the illustration of the life-saving station, it's easy for us to forget that one of the *main reasons* why we're still here and not in heaven is because we have a mission to save the lost
11. Though the Apostle Paul was a teacher without peer and understood the call to disciple Christians, he never lost his deep passion to see the lost won to Christ.
12. He wanted to make sure the churches he planted never lost that passion either.
13. So he exhorted Timothy to make sure the church at Ephesus prayed for the salvation of the lost.
14. Notice how he words it . . .

- 1 **Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,**
 - a. each of the three words Paul uses for prayer here carry a unique flavor that adds insight to his exhortation
 - b. a *supplication* is a request that arises from a deep sense of need [3]
 - 1) knowing what is lacking, we ask God to supply it
 - 2) when we pray for the lost we pray because we know that apart from Christ, they are lost and destined to an eternity of torment
 - 3) we know the lost are so lost and blind they don't even see their own peril – but we do!
 - 4) and seeing their need, their *desperate* need, we ask God to save them
 - c. *prayer* is the general word for prayer that is sometimes translated as “worship”
 - 1) it is prayer that is concerned, not with the need of the lost, but the GLORY OF GOD!
 - 2) God is glorified when sinners are saved
 - 3) and we can pray that for God's own name, the lost might be rescued
 - 4) this is how evangelism, even evangelistic praying, is worship!
 - d. the word *intercessions* comes from a root word that refers to *involvement*
 - 1) it speaks of sympathy and compassion!
 - 2) our prayer for the lost must not become some kind of cold, mechanical thing
 - 3) it is an *impassioned plea*
 - e. look at it this way . . .
 - 1) in *supplication*, we stand to the side and see heaven above and hell below
 - 2) in *prayer* we stand with God above
 - 3) and in *intercession* with stand with the sinners below
 - f. in *supplication* we speak to God of the *need* of sinners
 - g. in *prayer* we exalt the glory of God in the salvation of sinners
 - h. and in *intercession* we plead passionately for sinners who because they are spiritually dead, cannot plead for themselves
 15. Coupled to this we are to give thanks – trusting that as we pray for the Lost, God is well pleased to accomplish His glorious purposes in each and every life!
 16. Who does Paul say we are to pray for? **All Men!**
 17. We are to pray for all the lost, not just those we think we'd like to hang out

with eternally in heaven.

- a. our prayers are all too often narrow and limited to our own personal needs and those of our small circle of friends and family
- b. Paul widens our circle of prayer and faith here
- c. pray for who? **Everyone!**

18. Really – Everyone?

- a. let me ask you this question: Do you really want *everyone* to be saved?
- b. **politically** – how would you describe yourself – liberal or conservative?
 - 1) if you're a conservative, do you want the liberals to go to heaven?
 - 2) if you're a liberal, do you want the conservatives with you in heaven?
- c. Christian – do you want people who today are Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists in heaven with you eternally?

19. Remember the story of Jonah?

- a. Jonah learned that God loves *all people*, not just those Jonah thought worthy
- b. God told him to get up and go to Nineveh – the capital of Israel's chief enemies
- c. Jonah got up and went all right – in the *opposite direction*, trying to duck the call God had placed on his life to preach salvation to people Jonah didn't want to see in heaven!

20. You and I must not be Jonahs – Paul says we are to pray for ALL PEOPLE!

21. Then, in v. 2, he identifies a particular group he knows might be missed in prayer . . .

² **for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**

22. Kings and those in authority, the context meaning in *civil government*, are to be the **special focus** of prayer

- a. because rulers are so often tyrannical and brutal, it's easy to become bitter and hateful toward them
- b. instead of praying for their salvation, we find ourselves praying for their removal

23. Let me ask you this question – and it's such a fitting one right now: If things were to change and Al Gore were to become President – would you pray *for* him? Note I said “*for*” him, not “*against*” him!

24. It doesn't matter WHO the king is – what are we to do? Pray!

25. Whether it's the Democrats or the Republicans who are in control, as Christians – we have a solemn duty thrust upon us by God – to pray for their salvation!

26. It matters not whether the Supreme Court is filled with Strict or Loose Constructionists, OUR task is to fill the place of prayer for them!

27. Paul says the result of such prayer, if we would only be faithful to it, is the ability to lead a quiet life in a land filled with peace, so that we might be free to worship God and live holy lives.

28. And there you find the perfect balance between church and state

- a. it's the state's duty to ensure domestic peace
- b. so the church can pursue its task of being a blessing the state

29. It's fascinating to read the writings of the Early Church Fathers who wrote formal letters to the Roman emperor on why the persecution of Christians was a bad policy
- they wrote that it was the practice of Christians to *pray* for the emperor and the Roman government
 - at that time, Christians were being forced, on pain of death, to offer sacrifices to Caesar as god
 - so the church fathers were trying to tell Caesar that of all his citizens, none was more loyal than the Christian – he just couldn't worship him as god
 - but the Christian's God demanded that he show obedience and loyalty to the king in *every other way*
30. You know, what's most shocking is to realize that at the time Paul wrote these words, a virtual demon ruled in Rome – his name was Nero
- his hatred and torture of Christians was well known
 - Paul himself was executed during Nero's reign just a couple years after this letter was written
31. We must pray for the president and all those in civil government!
32. I like John MacArthur's comments in this regard . . .

If the church today took the time and energy it spends on political maneuvering and lobbying and poured them into intercessory prayer, we might see a profound impact on our nation. We have all too often forgotten that the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds. The key to changing a nation is the salvation of sinners, and that calls for faithful prayer.

33. Those who know what went on behind the scenes of the Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe say that far more than the economic victory of the Capitalistic West, what led to the demise of Communism in those countries was the quiet but consistent prayers of Christians.
34. In Romania and East Germany in particular, it was mass prayer meetings that led to the liberation of those nations from decades of darkness.

- 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,**
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

35. What is good? Prayer for *all* people, specially those in positions of leadership.
36. Paul says that not only is it good, it's acceptable to God!
- isn't it our concern to pray prayers we know are acceptable to God? This one is!
 - when we pray for the salvation of the lost, God is pleased.
 - when you pray for the salvation of your friends and loved ones, when you pray for the salvation of the people Jim Gately is witnessing to in Chile, or the Douglasses are ministering to in Kenya, or the Speights are sharing with in Thailand, God accepts your prayer!
 - this coming April, as we look forward to the Easter outreach, when you

- pray for those people you want to invite and see won to faith in Christ, God accepts your prayer!
- e. when you pray for Bill Clinton and George Bush and Al Gore, God hears you and accepts it.
37. Why? Why does He accept your prayer? Because far more than you desire the salvation of the lost – HE DESIRES ALL MEN AND WOMEN TO BE SAVED AND TO COME TO A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH!
38. This is the single truth that ought to fire up every one of us to become passionate, fervent, and consistent in praying for the salvation of the lost!
39. God wants all to be saved – He is not willing that any should perish – and He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.
40. On the contrary – He is the father of the prodigal son, who when he sees his repentant son afar off, goes running down the road to embrace him and cover him with kisses!
41. He is the God who pleads with sinners every day to turn from their sin and be saved, who invites them to reason with Him about their sin and His forgiveness
42. There are certain people you and I could name this morning who seem to be beyond salvation
 - a. they're people we might pick as the epitome of corruption and immorality
 - b. they defy everything we hold sacred and dear
 - c. but let me ask you – does God want Hugh Hefner to be saved?
 - d. does God desire Howard Stern to know His grace and cleansing?
 - e. does Madonna fall within the desire of God for eternal life?
43. If God longs for them to repent and know His salvation, how can we do anything but pray for them?
44. I rejoice at the news that Jane Fonda has recently been saved and has retired from the public eye so that she might study and prepare to represent the Lord.
 - a. a little less than 30 years ago, Fonda was considered by many in our nation to be a traitor
 - b. and to represent everything that was disgusting and corrupt
 - c. many Christians wrote her off!
 - d. but now, if her conversion proves genuine, she has the potential of bearing testimony to the power and love of Christ to many
45. Consider who wrote this – Paul, who at one time had been Saul, a blasphemer and murderer of Christians.
 - a. someone prayed for Saul, maybe while everyone else was cursing him, someone understood that God wanted to save Saul, and prayed for him.
 - b. that prayer was good and acceptable to God, who heard it, answered it, and turned Saul into Paul!
46. Your prayer may be the one that makes the difference for some Saul today!

B. Vs. 5-6

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**

1. Why is prayer for the salvation of all people so important?

2. Because there is only one way to God, and that is through Jesus Christ.
3. Contrary to modern thought, there are *not* many ways to God because there aren't many gods.
4. There is ONE God – and this one God has defined the way to Him.
 - a. we cannot come to Him any old way we want.
 - b. God is not so needy for companionship that He'll take us any way we want to come to Him.
 - c. He is not some cold and hungry beggar who stands outside, rapping on the door, hoping to escape the wind.
 - d. He is the Almighty, Majestic, Lord of Glory – the object of the worship of countless angels.
 - e. He doesn't NEED us! But He *wants* us – go figure!
5. The problem is this - sin has separated us from God!
 - a. we are sinners, God is holy
 - b. who can bridge the gap between us?
6. This was Job's dilemma -
 - a. he was on earth, a man, imperfect and weak
 - b. God was in heaven, holy and righteous and who could not look on evil
 - c. Job wanted desperately to speak with God and discover the cause of his distress
 - d. but he knew the problem was that there was no one to act as a go-between for him and God.
 - e. Job said, "There is no mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both."
7. Jesus Christ is that Mediator – he is the God-Man who laid his hand on sinful man and Holy God and makes it possible for them to be reunited.
8. He makes that reunion possible through the ransom of the cross.
9. You and I who were slaves of sin, have been ransomed from the slave market and made children of God by Christ's work on the cross.
10. He gave *Himself* as the ransom price – and that price was sufficient to pay for the sins of the entire world –
 - a. including all those people you know who aren't saved but you long to see saved!
 - b. Jesus died for them too!

III. CONCLUSION

A. For All!

1. Think of that - God wants all people to be saved!
2. Jesus' death is sufficient to atone for all!
3. When we pray for all, it is good and God accepts it.
4. Think about that!
5. Now let me ask you this – why doesn't every single seat in this room have someone in it this morning?
 - a. why aren't the aisles filled with people?
 - b. why aren't we at 3 or 4 services on Sunday morning, 1 on Saturday night,

- and a couple on Sunday evening?
- c. forget that, why are we in this building – why aren’t we meeting in the open field across the street because this building isn’t big enough?
 - d. why isn’t *every* seat in *every* church in this county filled?
 6. Is it because God is done saving the lost in Ventura County?
 7. No! – And I’ll tell you why all this *hasn’t* come to pass -
 8. The Church hasn’t done what Paul says here; we haven’t been diligent to pray for the salvation of the lost.
 9. Like the people in the story at the beginning of today’s message, we’ve lost sight of why we’re still here.

B. One Way!

1. One of the reasons we haven’t been diligent to pray for the lost is because we haven’t taken seriously the words of v. 5 . . .

There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

2. Friends, there is only one way to heaven – one way, through Jesus Christ!
3. Your neighbor, that person you work next to every day, the other people in the carpool, your friends, your family, not one of them will see God except through faith in Jesus Christ
4. Being a good person will not open the doors of heaven
5. Going to church will not merit eternal life
6. Jesus is the only way, the only One who can bridge the gap between the sinner and God – the Only Way!
7. Friday morning on the news they showed how in Florida, the elderly are lining up to get flu shots
 - a. there’s been a shortage of the flu vaccine and as a result, they’re weeks behind in administering the shots
 - b. now it’s reached a crisis and seniors are lining up to stand for hours so they can be inoculated against the flu.
 - c. it’s estimated that some 20,000 will die of the flu in the US this year!
8. Put your finger on your wrist and find your pulse – count it – every time your heart beats, 2 more people have just stepped into a Christ-less eternity!
9. You and I have the only cure for the fatal illness called sin – His name is Jesus.
10. The problem is, the sick will not line up to take the cure like they’re doing in Florida.
11. We have to take the cure to them
 - a. we do that by bringing them to God in prayer
 - b. and then bringing Him to them in our words and deeds

[1] Adapted from Hughes, R. Kent

[2] 1 Timothy 3:14-15

[3] MacArthur, Jr., John