

Grace-Shaped Living Part 1 • First Things First • 1 Tim. 2:1-6

I. INTRODUCTION • Read vs.

A. The Life-Saving Station

1. On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occurred, there stood a small life-saving station.
 - a. The building was little more than a hut w/a single boat, but the few devoted members of the station kept a vigilant watch over the sea.
 - b. They went out day & night to search for the drowning.
2. Those rescued were so grateful they joined the station, pledging their time & money to its work.
 - a. New boats were bought & fitted w/the latest life-saving gear. New crews were trained.
 - b. The life-saving station grew.
3. In time, some of the members became concerned the station was so crude & poorly equipped.
 - a. They thought since they spent so much time there it ought to be more comfortable.
 - b. So they bought better furniture & gear so those rescued would recover faster.
 - 1) The original emergency cots were replaced with cozy beds.
 - 2) The hut was remodeled & enlarged.
4. With the improvements, the station became a popular hangout for its members.
5. It grew even **more** well-equipped & soon **fewer** crews were willing to leave its comforts to go out on the cold & stormy seas to rescue the perishing.
6. One night a large ship was wrecked off the coast & the few lifeboats who went out returned with dozens of half-drowned people.
 - a. They were dirty & wounded, w/clothes ripped to shreds by the barnacle covered rocks.
 - b. The station was in chaos! Many were upset their bingo-night had been so rudely interrupted by a pack of needy outsiders.
 - c. They held a meeting & agreed **outbuildings** needed to be constructed where the life-saving task could be processed with greater efficiency & less mess to that part of the station they used.
7. But a rift developed between those who still went out to rescue & those who hadn't been in a boat for years.
 - a. The latter group wanted to **discontinue** the life-saving activities because they were unpleasant & got in the way of their social events.
 - b. The life-savers insisted **rescue** was their primary purpose & pointed out they were still called a "**life-saving station**."
 - c. But they were ignored & told if they wanted to keep saving lives, they could begin their own station down the coast. They did.
8. And 20 years later, the same thing happened again in the new station when another split occurred.
9. Today, if you visit that seacoast, you'll find a dozen impressive life-saving stations.
 - a. One of them is even built in the **shape** of a life-boat.
- b. And many members wear a silver charm of a boat on a chain around their neck.

B. Primary Focus

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

C. Recap

1. As we saw last week, Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to deal w/trouble-makers & to restore proper order to a church that had been unsettled by their shenanigans.
2. Beginning here in ch. 2, he tells Timothy the **priorities of church-life**.
3. As he does, he describes what a **Grace-shaped life** looks like.
 - a. As we saw last week, we're saved by the grace of God that comes thru faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. We're **not** saved by works, by keeping the law, the commandments.
 - c. The law was given to **reveal** sin, to confront us w/our moral & spiritual brokenness & convince us of our need of a Savior.

- d. Having made that clear, Paul emphasizes that while we aren't saved BY good works, we **are** saved FOR them.
- e. The grace that saves **first** delivers us FROM sin, **then** delivers INTO righteousness; that is, a life marked by doing good.
- f. We **do** good because, by grace, God has MADE us good in Christ.
- e. Paul says it this way in Eph. 2

⁸ By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

4. Now in ch. 2, Paul says the **first** work, our **primary priority** is **prayer**.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-4

¹Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, ²for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

1. A life shaped by God's grace is devoted to prayer, described by 4 terms that combine to give us the idea that prayer is something that ought to embrace all of life.

2. **Supplication** simply means to **request**.

- a. These requests may be for our own needs or another. Their **petitions** for God to act.
- b. Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread – that's supplication.
- 3. The word **prayer** is the generic word for all communication w/God & is sometimes translated "**worship**."
 - a. More than what's said, it's the awareness God is present, listening & giving guidance if we'll tamp down the volume on everything else long enough to hear Him.
 - b. This is what Paul refers to in 1 Thess. 5 when he says we can pray w/o ceasing. (v. 17)
 - c. It's living **Coram Deo** – before the face of God, consciously aware of His presence.
- 4. **Intercession** means **involvement, engagement**. When you intercede, you step-in & get involved.
 - a. The intercessor comes to God, not to pray for **things(supplication)**. It's for **people**.
 - c. Intercession is prayer for the salvation of the lost.
 - d. They are dead in sins & on their way to eternal doom apart from faith in Christ.
 - e. Being lost, they don't pray for their own salvation; **we** must pray FOR them.
 - f. We come to God ON THEIR BEHALF, & ask God to shower His mercy & grace on them, not wrath.
 - g. Here's how to pray for the lost.
 - 1) Ask God to **convict** them of sin.
 - 2) To **open** their blind eyes, **unstop** their deaf ears, & **soften** their hard hearts.
 - 3) Ask Him to send the Gospel to them so they'll realize the **solution** to conviction is Jesus.
- 5. Think of it this way . . .
 - 1) In **supplication**, we ask God for **specific things**.
 - 2) In **prayer** we ask God for **Himself**.
 - 3) In **intercession** with ask God for **People**.
- 6. A 4th kind of prayer is **giving thanks**. This is where **faith** enters into prayer.
 - a. We trust that as we pray in accord with His will, He hears & does what we ask.
 - b. We give thanks for what He's already done, what He's doing & what He'll yet do.
- 7. Paul says we're to pray for **all people**. This is important.
 - a. There's no one beyond the scope of God's grace – **NO ONE!**
 - b. Paul knew the Ephesians would need some details on **who** he meant by '**all**' so he spells it out in v. 2 –
 - c. Prayer is to be offered up on behalf of **civil rulers & those in authority** in every realm.
- 8. Before we look at the application of this in our day, consider who the Roman Emperor when Paul penned this – **Nero**.
 - a. According to conventional wisdom, Nero was **not** a guy you pray for. This was a guy you **abhorred**.
 - b. Praying for Nero would be like in WWII Jews praying for Adolf Hitler.
 - c. Nero was the enemy of the Church. He was a sick puppy who made sport of torturing Christians

- before putting them to death in the most diabolical ways.
- d. I won't describe the terrible things he did because children are listening.
 - e. It was Nero who had Paul arrested & executed.
9. Yet here Paul calls Christians to pray for the king.
 10. It doesn't matter **WHO** the ruler is – We must pray for them. Whatever their political party or bent, we have a solemn duty to intercede for them.
 11. Paul wasn't just spinning out an idealistic but impractical call here.
 12. He knew firsthand how important prayer for hostile leaders was. **He'd been one!**
 - a. Paul began as Saul, the Christian-hating agent of the Sanhedrin who'd officiated as the execution of the first martyr – Stephen.
 - b. Saul stood nearby & as the rocks pummeled Stephen's body – hearing Stephen's words, the same as Jesus uttered from the cross – "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing."
 - c. It wasn't long after that, that Jesus appeared to Saul in answer to Stephen's prayer & saved Saul; turning him from a murderer of the innocent into an Apostle, who would himself one day be martyred for his faith.
 13. God delights in turning Sauls into Pauls, blasphemous killers into Apostles.

No one is beyond the reach of God's grace.
 14. Our prayers for those in authority aim at allowing us to lead a quiet life in a land filled with peace, free to worship God & in a manner that blesses others.
 15. And there, my friend, is the perfect balance between church & state.
 - a. It's the God-ordained task of civil government to protect & ensure domestic peace.
 - b. That way, the church can pursue its task of being salt & light & being a blessing to **everyone IN the state.**
 16. It's fascinating to read the writings of the Early Church Fathers known as the **Apologists.**
 - a. They wrote essays to the Roman emperors on why persecution of Christians was bad policy.
 - b. They said it was the practice of Christians to **pray** for the emperor & officials.
 - c. At the time, Christians were forced to worship Caesar as a god or face execution.
 - d. The Apologists said of all citizens, none were more loyal than Christians; they just couldn't worship him.
 17. Friends, let's be careful to heed what the HS moved Paul to pen here & pray for President Obama, Vice-President Biden, Congress, the Supreme Court, Governor Brown & the rest in government.
 - a. My concern is that we've allowed our political views to **eclipse** & in some cases **trump** the priorities of our faith.
 - b. You may disagree vehemently w/whoever is in the White House, whether a Bush or an Obama.
 - c. That ought have **no bearing** on your prayer for them.
 - 1) Pray for the President's salvation – whoever he/she is.
 - 2) Then pray for the grace to govern well.
 18. John MacArthur's comments in this regard are poignant -

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.

19. Those who know what went on behind the scenes of the Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe say that far more than an economic victory of the Capitalistic West, what led to the demise of Communism was the quiet but consistent prayers of Christians.
20. In Romania & East Germany in particular, it was mass prayer meetings that led to the liberation of those nations from decades of darkness.
21. Let's make this a season of intense prayer for the nations of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, Lebanon, & Iran as they are now in the midst of major political turmoil.

B. Vs. 3-4

³For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

1. What's good? Prayer for **all** people, especially those in positions of authority.
2. It's also **acceptable to God**, meaning it's His will.
3. The great need in prayer is to pray in accordance with God's will!
 - a. We don't want our will done in heaven; we want His will done on Earth.
 - b. So as we pray, we ask that our thoughts & requests be shaped by the revelation of His will.
4. Well – here it is – **Here's** God's will –
⁴who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
5. God wants **everyone** to be saved!
6. That's the lesson the reluctant prophet Jonah learned.
 - a. Jonah loved his fellow Jews & loathed their enemies the Assyrians.
 - b. The Assyrians were a cruel, godless people who used **terror** as a political policy.
 - c. They were a kingdom ripe for judgment. The problem is, no one had given them a **chance** to repent & escape judgment.
 - d. So God told Jonah to get up & go to their capital, Nineveh with the call to repent.
 - e. Jonah went, but in the **opposite** direction. He **didn't want** the Assyrians to repent & be forgiven.
 - f. He wanted God to wipe them out! God wanted to forgive them.
7. Let's not be a Jonah, loving just Christians but hating everyone else and wishing God would rain His fiery wrath on them. God desires all people to be saved. He wants Muslims in heaven.
 - a. He wants Buddhists, Hindus, Mormons, JW's, Catholics & Baptists in heaven.
 - b. God wants Osama bin Laden & Lindsay Lohan, Hugh Hefner & Rush Limbaugh in heaven with Him.
 - c. He wants Russians, Iranians, Israelites, Chinese, Mexicans, & Canadians to turn to Jesus.
 - d. He wants Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians & Greens to be saved.
 - e. In the biggest mystery of all – He wants you & I in heaven.
8. It doesn't matter what labels we go by in this world; apart from Christ we're all sinners in need of a Savior & God loves us all & wants to save every one of us.
9. When we pray for the salvation of the lost, God is pleased because we're yielding to His will & the passion of His heart.
10. God wants all to be saved. He's not willing that **any** perish. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.
11. Every one of us is that wayward prodigal whom the Father keeps His eye peeled for to turn. The moment we do, He runs to embrace us & cover us with kisses.
12. God's Spirit **pleads** with sinners every day to repent & believe.
13. He invites them –“Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, I can make you as white as snow. Though they be red as crimson, I will make you as the whitest wool.”

C. Vs. 5-6

⁵For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time

1. While there are many false gods, there's only one true.
2. And there's only one way to that One God – thru Jesus.
3. Contrary to modern thought, there are **not** many ways to God.
4. Some years ago a student asked an liberal theology professor if there was one or many ways to God.
 - a. The professor smiled & answered by asking, “Well, is there one or many ways to Cleveland?”
 - b. He thought he was being witty. But all he did was reveal his foolishness, because Cleveland isn't heaven; not even close.
5. Listen, God wants us to spend eternity in heaven, but we must get there the way He's given; it's the only way in.
 - a. God isn't so needy for company He'll take us any way we want.
 - b. He's not some cold, hungry beggar standing outside, cap in hand, rapping on the door, hoping to escape the wind.
 - c. He is the Almighty, Majestic, Lord of Glory – the object of the worship of countless angels.
 - d. He doesn't **NEED** us! But He **wants** us – go figure!
6. The problem is sin which separates us from God. Who can bridge the gap? Jesus Christ.
 - a. He's the Mediator, the God-Man who laid his hand on sinful man & Holy God & reconciles us.

- b. He makes that reunion possible thru the cross.
- c. His blood was the ransom price that set us free & opened heaven For **ALL** who will believe.

III. CONCLUSION

A. For All!

- 1. Think of that - God wants **all** people to be saved! Jesus' death is sufficient to atone for all!
- 2. So, let me ask – Work with me here: Is God finished saving the lost in Ventura County?
 - a. How will they be saved? By repenting & relieving.
 - b. Will they do that on their own? No.
 - c. What can we do to help them? Pray!

B. One Way!

- 1. But we WON'T pray unless we're convinced 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 – Jesus Christ!
- 3. Your neighbor, that person you work with, the other people in the carpool, your friends, your family, not one of them will see God except thru faith in Jesus Christ.
- 4. Being a nice guy will not open the doors of heaven. Going to church doesn't merit eternal life.
- 5. Jesus is the only One who can bridge the gap between the sinner & God!
- 6. Put your finger on your wrist & find your pulse – count it – every time your heart beats, **2 more** have just stepped into a Christ-less eternity!
- 7. We have the only cure for the fatal illness of sin – His name is Jesus.
- 8. The problem is, the sick won't line up to take the cure. We have to take the cure **to** them.
 - a. We do that by bringing them to God in prayer -
 - b. Then bringing Him to them in our words & deeds.