

**Armagh Baptist Church – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2010**  
**The Life and Times of Timothy 4**  
**1 Timothy 2:1-8.**  
**Gospel Work needs Prayer**

**Introduction**

This morning we come to chapter two of 1 Timothy.

Here Paul begins to get down to business with the main matters that he wants Timothy to deal with in the Church in Ephesus.

You remember that some elders that Paul had probably appointed at the time the church was formed had gone badly off the rails, and in the process caused the church a lot of harm. And yet he doesn't deal with that first. No, the first thing that Paul wants Timothy to put right is the prayer life of the church.

**1. THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER (vs.1-3)**

When you're doing First Aid on someone who has just had some kind of accident, the first thing you need to sort out is their breathing. Try to find a pulse. Make sure their air ways are clear, and then give them mouth to mouth resuscitation. There is no point trying to bandage up a surface wound if the patient isn't even breathing!

And so as Timothy comes to carry out First Aid on this ailing church in Ephesus, the first thing he must sort out is their source of life - their prayer life. This is top priority!

Look at v.1 "*I urge then, first of all...*" Here we see the priority of prayer.

In January 2009, one of the first sermons I ever preached to you was from Jeremiah 29. We saw there that if we want God to come and bless us here in Armagh, then we need to seek God with *all* of our hearts (Jeremiah 29:11-14). Are we really doing that as we come to the end of my first year with you?

If we want our church to go forward; If we want the Devil's attacks to be defeated; Then there is no other way - We must Pray, Pray more, and Pray harder!

**\* What does it involve? (v.1) –**

**Requests:** - Prayer involves asking - Showing we need God to answer.  
- Do we just talk when we pray, or do we really ask?  
- (See Matthew 6:5-8; 7:7-11 & James 1:2-8; 4:1-3.)

**Prayers:** - This involves expressing our need to God - we depend on Him.  
- We often quote it, but it's true - (John 15:5)  
- Jesus said, "*Apart from me, you can do nothing.*"

**Intercession:** This is being a go-between for somebody else.  
- Praying for others, not just *our* own needs.  
- Have our prayers become selfish & narrow?  
- Do we pray for other churches throughout this island eg. Youghal?  
- Or are we only wrapped up in ourselves? (If so, that's unhealthy!)  
- Praying for the unsaved (who can't pray for themselves, until they come to God acknowledging their sin) so they can get saved?

**Thanksgiving** - As well as asking for new things, do we really stop to thank God for what he has already done for us in answer to prayer?  
- How often do we really give thanks?  
- eg. Prayer meeting at the end of the Year. But let's do it more often!

**\* Who are we to pray for? - (v.1) "*For everyone*"**

There is no-one beyond the bounds of our praying - no matter who they are, or what they've done. Friend or enemy we are still supposed to pray for them. But then Paul becomes more specific in v.2:-  
"*- For kings and all those in authority.*"

Now the people in Ephesus might have struggled with this one. It's the mid-sixties of the 1st Century, and the wicked Emperor Nero is on the throne of Rome. This was the man who used to tar and feather Christians, then set them a-light to light up his palace gardens at night! - Pray for him!?!

This was the same man who set fire to Rome, 'fiddled while Rome burned' and then put the blame for starting the fire on the Christians, and then banished them from the City unleashing a terrible persecution against them!

And Paul says pray for the likes of him? Yes!  
But why should they?  
Why should we pray for the government of Northern Ireland, the UK, or Ireland (depending on where we live)? (vs.2&3). Paul tells us:

1. So that we may live our lives in peace and quiet.
2. So that we might live our lives in godliness and holiness.
3. Because this is good and pleases God our Saviour.

We should pray that God will create circumstances on this island in which we can more readily and easily spread the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. That the polarization and the bigotry of the past would go, so that people from all kinds of backgrounds might be more open to hear, and to think about, the Gospel contained in the Bible, as God has revealed it. We should continue to pray for the peace process - however shaky it might look at times against the backdrop of the dissident threat, and the frustrating

things that go on up at Stormont. We need to pray, so that whatever the outcome might be, that it might be better for the spread of the Gospel.

We should pray for all those in authority, and particularly in the lead up to the General Election on 6<sup>th</sup> May, that the right people will be elected to serve us.

So Paul calls us to pray for all kinds of things. His top priority for the church in Ephesus was their prayer life. We must pray, if we are to go anywhere. So we have seen the Priority of Prayer, but secondly...

## 2. THE STRESS IS ON SALVATION (vs.3-6)

See how often Paul stresses salvation in these verses:-

\* God is referred to as *"God our Saviour"*

- It's part of God's Character to save.
- It's in his heart to save the likes of us.

\* We're told that God **'wants all men to be saved'** - This is God's desire.  
*"He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9).

God takes no delight in sending anybody to Hell - He would far rather that people would turn to Him and be saved. But they must turn; otherwise they will end up in hell.

God is not willing that any should perish, but He is also a just God, and if you decide to hold onto your sin, rather than turning in repentance to Christ, then God must be true to himself and to his Word, and punish your sin instead.

God wants all men to be saved - BUT - they must (as verse 4 says) -  
*"...come to a knowledge of the Truth."*

What's The Truth - It's the Truth of the Gospel of course, as Paul puts it in v.5.  
*'For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who give himself as a ransom for all men.'*

\* Here is the Truth - that there is only one way to be saved, to get right with God, and God has provided it – It's through His Son Jesus. (cf. John 14:6).

Here Paul says,

***"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men."***

He paints the picture of Salvation as being an Act of Reconciliation between God and Men. Two parties who once were estranged, now brought back together again, on the basis of the payment of a ransom price.

The two parties were divided - Men and women separated from God because of their SIN. We have all rebelled against God, and wilfully done what is wrong in his sight.

So God is angry with us, and rightly so, for persisting in our sin and going our own way.

For the two sides to be brought back together again we need a Go-Between (a Mediator).

And yet again, it is God who provides this Go-Between - His own Son - Jesus.

Now a True Go-Between or Mediator needs to be able to identify with both sides of the problem. And in this case, of the rift between Men and God, there is only one who can do that – It's Jesus.

Because Jesus was God, God the Son, but when he came into this world, he became a Man. So he was fully God, and fully Man, both at the same time!

And how did Jesus (the God-Man) make this reconciliation possible? (v.6)  
He did it by giving Himself, in our place, in his death on that cross, as a Ransom price to pay the penalty for our sins - The penalty of sin was Death.

So on that cross, Jesus took all your sins and mine upon himself, and during those hours of darkness, he took upon himself all the wrath and anger and punishment of a holy righteous God (that you and I deserved), and in his dying moment as he cried out ***"It is finished"*** he reached one hand out to God the Father, and he reached his other hand out to you and me (sinful men and women) and he can now offer to you and me Reconciliation with God our Maker, as a free gift from the hand of a gracious God.

God has shown clearly that he wants ***all men*** to be saved, because Jesus gave his life as a ransom for ***all men***. So why aren't ***all men*** saved?

Ans. Because each one of us has to come personally ourselves and take the gift of salvation that God offers to us in His Son - Jesus Christ, as a free gift.

Have you accepted that gift?

There is only One Way (v.5) There is Only One who has paid our price (v.6). Don't try to come to God any other way. Not only does it not work, but it's an affront to the God who has done so much to bring us to Himself in His Way!

So The Priority is on Prayer. The Stress is on Salvation, and thirdly...

### **3. OUR GOAL MUST BE THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL (vs.7-8)**

The Gospel, or the Good News I've just told you about, is what Jesus has done for you. This is "*the testimony given in its proper time*" that Paul talks about at the end of v.6.

The Gospel is a message, given, revealed, or deposited, with certain men - the Apostles - by God himself. It is not some message that men themselves made up. That would never work. It is God's Way of Salvation, not man-made. So it must be spread to all men! They all need to hear it while there is yet time! The very fact that it is the only way to God means it must be spread all the more urgently! But how?

#### **(i) By Preaching. (v.7)**

Paul was a preacher of this Gospel - he was appointed by God to be...

- A Herald of the King.
- An Apostle of Christ.

In other words he had been sent to proclaim this great truth to others.

Notice how much he emphasises that it is '**the truth**' (vs.4, 7b, 7c.)  
He had been sent to the Gentiles (part of the "*all men*") - not just to the Jews!

This Gospel has still to be spread to all men by people like you and me proclaiming it, not just in preaching like this, but also in one-to-one contacts and conversations with others as well. **Is that your Goal and mine?**

#### **(ii) By Prayer. (v.8)**

Here Paul is right back to where he started from in v.1 - The Priority of Prayer. If the Gospel is truly to be spread as it ought to be, then it must be backed up and bathed with prayer. Jesus said, "*Apart from Me, you can do nothing.*" So it must be '**By prayer**'! (the motto of SIM - the mission I used to work for).

If we realised the importance of this task of spreading the Gospel above everything else, then as v.8 puts it, we would:-  
- see the need to live holy lives, to be able to pray with holy hands.  
- have less time to be angry, or fall out with each other, or dispute with each other, over mere trivialities of church life, and we'd be united in our common goal of spreading the Gospel. But so often we get side-tracked from it all!

We must not let internal church problems distract us from the task of spreading the Gospel! That's what we learn from this passage this morning. Yes there was much to be sorted out internally in Ephesus, but even more important for them and for us: is the need to make Prayer a Priority, to keep the Stress on Salvation, and to keep the spread of the Gospel as our Goal.

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