



Sermon – 05/14/2017

*1 Timothy 2:1*

*Matthew 6:6*

*Ecclesiastes 5:1 - 2*

*Exodus 20:8 - 11*

Moms. We're going to go to 1 Timothy today. We're going to continue through what we're reading. But if you hang in there with me I'm going to bring it home to you at the end of the message. Last couple weeks ago my wife and I were hosting the kids that have come through Central that are senior pastors, at CAPS, and one of the guys had a unique Bible. They haven't finished it completely, but it is, it lists the books, but it lists the books without any chapters or verses. So you go to Romans; no chapters or verses and you just read through Romans literally as he wrote it. The problem with what we have is you come to chapter 2 and you think, "Ok. We're done with chapter one. We move on." But in fact chapter 2 is explicitly based on the end of chapter one. That's why he says in verse one of chapter two therefore I exhort you first of all. Now when he says therefore he's referencing back to the idea when he told Timothy, he said, "I want you to fight the good fight." You're in a battle, you're in a spiritual battle, you're effecting demons, you're effecting angels, you're affecting a spiritual war around you. Timothy, remember, he's telling him what to do at Ephesus. He said the same thing to the Ephesians where he talks about a spiritual battle is inside the city. So he's writing to Timothy in the city of Ephesus and he says, "I want you to fight the good fight." He mentioned a couple guys he's dealt with. But then he comes and says, "Therefore." In other words if we're going to fight the good fight, and we talked about having faith, we stand on the principles of God, we stand on the promises of God. He says, "Listen we're going to fight the good fight." Here's, now listen: therefore I exhort you, first of above, here's the deal, first thing he says, I want you to do. If you're going to engage in a spiritual battle.

Now normally we go through each, what they call, the fancy word in seminary is paricope, we go through each stand-alone section of scripture. We're going to split this section. Now chapters 2, 1 – 7, what he basically is saying is, "I want you to pray. Here's the first thing I want you to do, as you engage in a spiritual battle, I want you to pray for those people over you so that your prayer will create an environment whereby you can share the truth about Jesus Christ." Now that's going to be the stand-alone scripture passage that we're in. Well we're going to cut it in half. We're going to look at the second half next Sunday morning. But we're going to look at the first half. He says, "Therefore, I'm telling you first of all, now listen, I want you to make petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, for all men on behalf of kings and all of those who are in authority so that, now you hear that, now we're just going to be real honest today,

OK. I don't think we believe that anymore. I think even the church has come to a point where we're caught up in what we see tangible and we don't really believe in what we don't see anymore. He says our prayer life can create a situation in the world where it will be easy for us to share the gospel. And he says that. That our prayers can impact. Now I don't know that we buy that anymore, but you need to understand that is explicitly true. You will not see what your prayers do. You're not going to see that. Doesn't matter. When we went through the book of 2 Corinthians we came to chapter 5, remember he said to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and then he makes this statement in connection with that. He said, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." I've been in the room when people have died. I've seen them die. I've been with the families. There's never been a person that knows Jesus Christ that I've been in the room of that Jesus did not come and get and take home. Never. But I have never once seen Jesus come in the room. I've never seen that because I walk by faith, not by sight. I see the body give something up. I see it cease to function. I don't see the spirit and soul leave. I don't see Jesus come. But the Bible says he does and so therefore I'm in it.

Now it's the same thing with your prayer life. You are not going to see the tangible expression of your prayer life. That's why we have become as a church more accustomed to the ballot box than to our knees. We see the results of the ballot box. We see this person elected, that person elected, we see this change, that change, and so we see all those things so we see the tangible and we become like the world. They live in the tangible of anybody, we should live in the non-tangible and the Jesus who responds to what we say. So he says, "Here's what I want. I want you to pray so that." You're going to pray so that God will respond to your prayers. Now he does respond to your prayers. Now listen to what he says, OK. Now we're going to walk through this slowly today. I hope your mother's day lunch is in the crock pot. Here's what he says.

[I exhort you to pray on behalf of kings, all men, and those who are in superior positions.](#)

Now he's in Ephesus, right. Let me just lay this on the table so we get this. There were a lot less government officials in Ephesus than there are even in Bryan/College Station. We have a much bigger government which poses a little bit of a problem for us. So here's what we're going to do. You're going to have to make a list that you keep of particular people you pray for. Now the best way to do that, number one I think you pray for the top two people. You pray for the president, oh please pray for the president, pray for the president and you pray for Governor Abbott. Those should be on your list. Now what are you going to do with the rest of it? You're going to tether, I'm sorry, you're going to make the list based on the people that I think you're tethered to in some way. For example if you have children in public school, you are going to pray for your Superintendent and for the principle where your kids go to school. You're going to put them on the list. We have a responsibility in this church, we have a congressional representative in the federal government, Bill Flores, and his wife Gina, they attend here. If there is anything we should be praying for it's a man connected to us. So Bill Flores ought to be on your list. So we need to make a list. You need to come up with some list however you do it of people, number one the president, number two the governor, and then you bring in the people locally, if you live across the street from the City Manager of Bryan, then he needs to be on your list. Because God providentially put you near him for you to bathe him in prayer. Why? Because our prayers work. So you're going to take and make up a list of people. You can't pray

for everybody in leadership over you. You don't have the time. You're going to limit the list but you're going to limit the list to people you're connected to in some way. OK. Those over you. So we're going to start with the president, the governor, we're going to make a list.

Now when we do that here's how we're going to do it. Look carefully at what he says. Number one: I want you first of all to pray for all, I want you to pray for all men making, number one here's what he says, petitions. Here's what he says. Now the Greek word here means a singular request with specificity. In other words if you have the president on your list you're not just going to pray, "God bless him." That doesn't fit that Greek word. You're going to be specific. As a matter of fact I'm going to tell you what to pray for President Trump. Here it is. We're going to pray that God destroys his ability to tweet. I can't think of a better prayer request for us to lay before the Father. You're going to make it particular. That's what he says. You're going to particularize your request for those people over you.

Now here's the problem we face in one sense. You cannot pray what you want for that person. 1 John 5 says I have to pray what God wants for that person. And that if I pray what God wants he will answer the prayer because I pray what he wants. So I don't get to pray what I want because really if you pray what you want you wind up really praying for yourself. So your job is to pray for them. Now how do I know what to pray then? Two ways. Number one, and we'll look at the second one in a minute, but here's the first way. You're going to take scripture and pray it over these people. For example the Bible say in the multitude of counselors there is great wisdom. So here's what you're going to pray. You're going to pray for President Trump, Governor Abbot, superintendent of schools here, principal at your daughter or son's school, this is what you're going to pray. God, based on your word, I want to pray your scripture and I'm going to ask you that the people in the principal's life will give her or he the wisdom that they need to execute their position in the best way possible for the gospel to go forward. So you're going to take Biblical principles and you're going to pray scripture into their lives. If Bill Clinton were in office my prayer would be based on the second chapter, third chapter of Timothy. My prayer would be, "let him see, Father, as you have told us with pastors and deacons, let him see that character is more important than success." You're going to pray Biblical principles over these peoples. That way you're praying God's will. I really do believe, and again I'm talking to me, I really do believe one of the reasons we're in such a mess in this country is we have gone to the ballot box more than we've gone to our knees. So we're going to pray for these leaders that we're tethered to, we're going to pray scriptural principles. OK. Now so there's the first thing. I'm going to have this list of a handful of people and I'm going to write down particular principles that I think they need. For example, for Representative Flores who's in our church, I would pray that he have the courage to stand in the middle of a mess on the principles he believes in as he leads our country. I'm going to take scriptural principles and pray them into their lives.

Now second thing. Look at what he says: petitions, prayers. Just the general word for prayer. Now follow what he says because he really makes great points here. I'm going to pray so that, I'm going to pray for people in leadership, I'm going to pray God's principles and then I'm going to step, and all of this now is going to come out of my general prayer life because that's the Greek word here. It's just the word for prayers. Now here's the problem we face, OK. What does the Bible mean when it says that you and I are to have a prayer life? What does it really say

about it? Now there are two things you can do. You can go to Lifeway bookstore in town. You can buy any number of books on how to have a prayer life and they will all be written by the same kind of people who think you have to fold your towels a certain way to get them in the cabinet. They will give you all sorts of rules. You've got to pray in the morning; it's the best time. You've got to pray early. You've got to discipline yourself. You've got to be there for an hour at least. You've got to pray adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. You've got to pray, they'll give you every possible rule in the rule as to how you're supposed to pray. So here's what you need to do. Take those books and give them to the Mormons because they're not legitimate. Got in trouble with the Catholics last week, we'll just go all the way.

Now so what does the Bible really say? I think a couple things. I want you to come back with me to 1 Timothy, but we're going to fly fast. Look at Matthew 6. Matthew chapter 6 beginning in verse 6. Now here's the first thing that the Bible says. This is Jesus talking about prayer. Now here's the first thing we know. OK. Now listen.

*6But you, whenever you pray, enter into your closet shut your door to pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret shall reward you.*

Now there's the first thing he says. Now what does it mean to go into my closet? It means if I pray in secret there are only two people in the closet. Me and him. Nobody else. If there's somebody else in the closet, you're not really developing a prayer life. Because I don't care what you believe about accountability. You can't pray the deepest part of your heart if somebody else is in that room. You're in the room because you're going to focus on him. Don't you dare take this in there with you. Every time you hear a ding, every time you hear a whoosh, you say, "Well I've got it turned off." Every time you hear the vibration, it's going to take away your focus from your Father. Now unless you're an anesthesiologist on call, don't take your phone in there because about halfway through reading scripture you're going to be thinking, "I wonder what people are saying." Now I'm going to say this as lovingly, if you have to carry this in there because you crave this more than you crave that, that is idolatry. If you're going to go into the closet, you take this phone and you leave it outside. You don't need to be on Facebook. You don't need to hear any texting. You don't need to wonder what people are saying. You can't focus on Jesus Christ with that phone in the room with you. So you're going to take it out and if you can't take it out, if it's just too addicting for you, then I wouldn't even go into the prayer room. I'd go out into the woods and repent my heart before God that I love this more than I do him. So we're going to go into the closet. All we know, how long should I stay in the closet? Did he say there? Did he? No. Did he say whether or not I should do that in the morning or the evening? No. Did he say how many books I ought to take in there with me? No. Did he say whether or not I can listen to music? No. What does he say? What's he think? Get in the closet. Shut the door so it's you and the Father and that's your focus. That's your agenda. Now here's what you're going to do. You're going to take this book and you're going to read it until you focus.

Look at the next one. Ecclesiastes, great book, chapter 5. You go Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes. So that's right after the Psalms. I want you to listen to chapter 5 and here's what the Bible says because this is the other principle of going in and shutting your closet.

<sup>1</sup>Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Better to approach in obedience than to offer the sacrifice as fools do, they ignorantly do wrong. <sup>2</sup>Do not be hasty to speak.

So in other words even though I've got this list, right, and I'm coming in in obedience to the Father with this list, I'm still not hasty to jump in there to throw the list to him and then leave. No, no, no, no, no. Look at what he says.

Do not be impulsive to make a speech before God, he's in heaven, you're on earth. Let your words be few.

So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to step into that closet, shut the door, I've got my list, but before I lay out my list I'm going to read my Bible until I sense that I am focused on him. You have in you the Holy Spirit of God. The Bible says the spirit bears witness with our spirit that we're the children of God. We hear God through the Holy Spirit indwelling us. He's in there. So when you go in there and you read enough scripture you're going to say, when you start focusing, here's what you're going to do, you're going to say, "God tell me what to pray. Tell me what." So now you're going to take the list and listen to the Holy Spirit because what you have on your list may not be what the Holy Spirit wants you to pray right there. And then what I do is I simply pray about everything that comes into my mind. If it's this church, if it's friends, if it's family, I simply pray what I feel I ought to pray about everybody. You say, "Well I could be there forever." Yeah, I remember in college I did this; first time. I got in, I took Matthew 6 seriously and I took my clock and turned it away and I sat down and opened my Bible and I read and I prayed until I prayed everything I could think of. I turned the clock back - 15 minutes. I thought I'd been in there an hour and a half and I was like Martin Luther again. I thought I was great. 15 minutes. So do not think it's going to last hours. OK. You're going to get in the closet. You're going to open up this book. You're going to read until you focus. You're going to bring your list and then you're going to pray whatever he tells you to pray. Now, you say, "How often should I open my closet door?" What does the Bible say? It only says one thing. We don't know how many times Jesus prayed. We know there were times he prayed at night. We know there are times he prayed in the morning. We know there are times when he prayed all night. We don't know how long he prayed. We don't know how often he prayed. What we do know is the Bible, in the book of Exodus, makes this statement in chapter 20. It's one of the commandments. Now listen to what Exodus 20 says.

<sup>8</sup> "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> You're to labor six days and do all your work. <sup>10</sup> But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. You must not do any work. You, your son, your daughter, your male, your female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates. <sup>11</sup> For the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days, then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.

One day a week for sure you need to be in your closet with your list hearing the Father, focusing, hearing the Father and praying your list and whatever else he tells you to pray. We do know one day a week. When you read these books at the mall they're going to tell you every day. And what happens is you go in there Monday, you go in there Tuesday, you go in there Wednesday,

and then you fail Thursday, and you miss Friday, and then you're in there Saturday, pretty soon you feel guilty and you quit. That's why the Bible doesn't give a whole bunch of directives because we're all at different seasons in our lives. If you're retired, you've got a lot more time to pray than some young mom who's sitting at home with two kids and a stay at home mom and she's got two kids going, "More juice." You've got more time to pray than she has. So the seasons alter that. That's why the Bible doesn't give all these rules that the books do at Lifeway. So when we do our general prayers we're going to focus, we're going to get in our closet, we're going to listen, and we're going to do it at least one day a week. As a matter of fact, gentlemen, when your wife says she doesn't have time, doesn't matter what day you do the Sabbath, you take those kids and you give your wife one day a week when she can be alone with Jesus Christ. Number one she needs to be rid of the kids for sanity. And number two she needs time with the Lord.

Now then he gives the third thing. Look at this.

### petitions, prayers, intercessions

Now that Greek word literally is the idea that I have the right to go to someone above me and make a request. In other words it's the idea of boldness and courage. You cannot go into the oval office where you're equal is. You can't go because there are men that will kick you out and put you in jail. But you can go to the greatest being in the universe any time you want to, day or night, long or short, quick prayer/long prayer. You can go anytime you want to to the Creator of the universe because of the blood of Jesus Christ. So I have a boldness that people without Christ don't have. I can go to the absolute superior and I can step into his presence and nobody tells me no. As a matter of fact Romans 5 says that Jesus is our access to the Father. When you meet Christ, Jesus pulls us in and says, "Father this is your new child." I'm adopted and therefore I have automatic intimacy with my father. So here's what he says. Now listen. He says, "We're going to pray in a way that will change the world so the gospel can be heard. We're going to do it by praying for those people in our lives that are over us. We're going to pray with specific petitions in the time that we're in that room because we have the courage and the boldness to come to the creator of the universe who says he will answer our prayers if we pray what he wants, not what we want." And then he says,

### with thanksgiving.

If that truth doesn't make you grateful, you have an issue. The great thing about that truth is it doesn't matter what happens to you physically. You can always do that. I was on a panel at Seminary the other day with three or four other guys and Dr. Allen, someone asked him a story, and he was talking about his first church, small church, sixty-five in Sunday school, he was only there a year and a half. But he said the last Sunday he was there he baptized 15 young people. He said it's the most they'd baptized ever among the youth. And then he said, "I got a lot of credit for it, but I knew really what the issue was." When he had first gone there, a lady said, "Would you come over to the house and visit with me?" So he went over to the house, walked in, and she's bed-ridden. And this is in the days before live-streaming and blogging and podcasting. Back in those days the only thing you really had was a cassette recorder. That didn't work well. There was no real sound system that could record that sort of stuff. So she

looked at him and she said, “You know, I will never hear you preach. I can’t get out of here and I can’t hear you. But I will make you this promise that every Sunday when you’re in that pulpit the entire hour I will bathe it in my prayer for you.” That’s really the cool thing. It doesn’t matter how old I get. It doesn’t matter what little things I can do. 1 Timothy I can live out all my life. And moms, been down that road, not as a mom, want to be clear, we have grandkids now. If we’d been down the road with children, I know the hardness. I know the difficulty even though my wife and I were unified on everything. I know for some, what is funny about that? Some of you people are sick. So when you’re a single mom spiritually, you’re a single mom physically, even if you’re a mom and your husband’s there, but he’s gone to work and you’re a stay at home mom or you work and then you come home. It’s the hardest job in the world. And the enemy is going to always make you wonder if the gospel is going to permeate your child’s life. Let me be clear today. If my prayers can impact a governor I don’t even know don’t you think your prayers will impact the children God gave you to teach them about him. As a mom you take 1 Timothy 2, you breath your child before the Father, nothing you do is more pivotal than that. And God will honor that prayer because he’s the one who gave him to you in the first place. Mother’s Day is a great reminder. Our prayers will change the lives of our children.

Father even as I come to you, thank you for your truth, its integrity, its clarity. Father I pray for me and everybody in this room that we will re-understand that our prayers based on your will work. That we can alter this landscape for the gospel and we can alter our homes for the gospel. Make that clear. Make that concise. And Father burn that in us. Let this not just be a sermon we heard, but a sermon we live so that your gospel can go everywhere it needs to go. I ask you that in Jesus Christ name.