

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES



Prayer and Piety: 1 Timothy 2

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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Pastoral Epistles: Prayer and Piety: 1 Timothy 2
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1 Timothy 2: Introduction

Having established the primacy of sound teaching in the local church, Paul turns to the subject of prayer and piety.

Men need to pray more than they do – much more. Paul instructs Timothy to get all the men of the church praying, in all kinds of ways, and in every place, so that the Gospel and the Kingdom can flourish.

Women, meanwhile, are charged with bearing a strong and constant witness to Christ by their modest beauty, godliness, and good works. They further set the example for all learners by practicing submission to the Lord according to all His Word.

Men and women have distinct roles in the church, just as Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden. The church is the new garden of Eden, and all of us are called to embrace God's order and fulfill our individual callings within it.

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1 All Kinds of Prayers

Pray 72.18, 19.

Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only does wondrous things!
And blessed *be* His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled *with* His glory.
Amen and Amen.

Read and meditate on 1 Timothy 2.1, 2.

Preparation.

1. Explain the different kinds of prayers Paul mentions in these verses.
2. Paul doesn't *suggest* concerning such prayers; he *exhorts*. What's the difference?

Meditate.

1 Timothy 2 addresses the role of men and women in the church. We may find some of what Paul says difficult to receive, but if we do, it will be because we are seeking to impose on Scripture a contemporary view of the way we think things ought to be, but missing the rich truth Paul sets forth.

First, Paul *exhorts* Timothy concerning prayer. He insists that, in the church, all kinds of prayers should be going up in all kinds of places (v. 8) for all kinds of people. The Church, which is the temple of the Lord (Eph. 2:19-22), is intended to be, like the ancient temple, a house of prayer (cf. Matt. 21:12, 13). Each believer is also a temple of the Lord (1 Cor. 6:19) and should therefore likewise be a source of all kinds of prayers in all kinds of places.

We are a far cry from being either of those, to be sure. Before we get upset or defensive or haughty about the roles of men and women in the church, let's concentrate on the role of prayer in the church and the believer. Paul *exhorts* because the kind of prayer he has in mind here really matters. It matters more than anything else. Prayer is the *defining practice*, both of a local church and each believer.

All kinds of prayers, too: for ourselves (*supplications*), of praise (*prayers*), for others (*intercessions*), and thanksgiving. We should pray for "all men" – that is, all people, beginning with those we see throughout the week in our Personal Mission Field, and including general prayers for all the people of the world. Our prayers should include those who serve in government, in particular, that they would serve us *for good*, as God intends (Rom. 13:1-4), allowing believers and their communities to flourish (v. 2), and the Kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10, 33).

The pastor's primary job is to ensure that the people in his care are receiving sound teaching and learning to love, following the Law of God (chapter 1). His second responsibility is to work to make his congregation, and each of its members, true houses of prayer. We who are the flocks of the Lord must be similarly concerned, for ourselves and for our churches.

Obviously, we need to work harder at each of these priorities.

Reflect.

1. How would you describe the practice of prayer in your church? In your personal life? What can you do to improve each of these?

2. What did Paul see as the outcomes we should be seeking in prayer? How do these goals for prayer mesh with the goals for learning we observed in chapter 1?
3. Why did Paul *exhort* Timothy regarding this matter of prayer? Should believers exhort one another for prayer? Explain.

These exercises of godliness maintain and even strengthen us in the sincere worship and fear of God, and cherish the good conscience of which he had spoken. Not inappropriately does he make use of the word therefore, to denote an inference; for those exhortations depend on the preceding commandment. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on 1 Timothy 2.1

Lord, as I would learn to love more, so give me a heart to pray more, specifically to pray...

Pray Psalm 72.15-20.

Let the Spirit lead you to thank God for David – the author of this psalm – and for Solomon – for whom it was composed – and for Jesus – Who fulfills its promise completely. Bless and praise Him for all the specific ways His Kingdom has come in and through your life.

Sing Psalm 72.18-20.

Psalm 72.18-20 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

Let Christ be praised and all the gold of Sheba be His right.

Let blessings to His Name be told, and prayers made both day and night.

And let the earth abound with grain, let fields His fame proclaim.

And may our King forever reign and nations bless His great Name.

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.

And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forever more!

2 Good and Acceptable

Pray 72.12-14.

For He will deliver the needy when he cries,
The poor also, and *him* who has no helper.
He will spare the poor and needy,
And will save the souls of the needy.
He will redeem their life from oppression and violence;
And precious shall be their blood in His sight.

Read and meditate on 1 Timothy 2.3, 4.

Reflect.

1. *What* is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior?
2. What does it mean to be saved?

Meditate.

God has a vision of how things ought to be among the peoples of the world. In that vision, He sees His people praying all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people (v. 1). This is “good and acceptable” to Him (v. 3). The fruit of such prayers – that we might live peaceably in all godliness and reverence (v. 2) – is also “good and acceptable” to the Lord. It’s just a little harder to realize.

But if we give ourselves to prayer, as Paul *exhorts*, then we can be certain that we’re doing what God approves, what is exactly in line with His vision for us. The rest of God’s vision we’ll be working on throughout the course of our lives. But we must do so *God’s way*, by the Gospel of love and good works.

We make the mistake as believers by thinking we can realize the promise of “a quiet and peaceable life” without praying for it, or pursuing the “godliness and reverence” that accompany it. Instead, we pursue peace and quiet through primarily political and material means, giving only a minimal role to prayer and godliness, and hardly ever speaking to anyone about the Gospel. This condition, we can be sure, is *not* “good and acceptable” to the Lord.

For God desires all people to be saved, and to know Him. We must make a distinction here between the *will* of God and what God *desires*. God’s *will* is set in stone. Nothing can alter or prevent what He has *willed* from before the foundations of the world. God *desires* all men to be saved; but clearly, all men are not going to be saved. God loves even those who are His enemies, even though He has not *willed* their salvation (cf. Matt. 5.44, 45; Rom. 9.14-16). He loves them because they are His creatures, and because He would incite them by His goodness to repent and believe the Gospel (Rom. 2.4). Even thus, God has not willed that all should be saved. Those who will not be saved will receive the wages or their rejection of the knowledge of God (cf. Rom. 3.23; 1.18-32) and their scorn for His goodness.

We can neither fully understand nor completely reconcile this mystery. What we should learn from it, however, is that, since God *desires* all people to be saved, and loves and does good to them so that they might, so should we. We should seek the salvation of all the people to whom God sends us each day, beginning in our prayers; and do good to them, that they might know God’s love through us and be saved.

To be saved is to “come to the knowledge of the truth” that is in Christ Jesus (v. 4; cf. Jn. 17.3). All who reject this knowledge and choose to live apart from the Lord are trapped in the lie (Rom. 1.18-25). We who

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know the Lord – and thus love Him and seek His Presence always – are the means whereby salvation comes to lost people. Let us therefore grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Pet. 3.18) and go to the world as Jesus did, to bring near the Good News of Christ and His Kingdom (Jn. 20.21; Matt. 4.17).

Reflect.

1. How would you counsel a new believer to pursue what is “good and acceptable” to the Lord Who saved Him?
2. If we desired the people in our life to be saved, as God does, what would we do to express that desire?
3. Are you growing in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ? In what ways?

Do not be afraid to pray for the Gentiles. God himself wills it. Fear only to pray against anyone. For that God does not will. And if you pray for the heathen, you ought of course to pray for heretics as well, for we are to pray for all humanity and not to persecute. And this is good also for another reason: We are partakers of the same nature. God calls us to have good will and affection toward one another. John Chrysostom (344-407) *Homilies on 1 Timothy 7*

Lord, make my heart reflect the desires of Your heart, and use me today to...

Pray Psalm 72.1-14.

Praise God for the many benefits of salvation mentioned here. Pray for the lost people in your Personal Mission Field, and your witness to them.

Sing Psalm 72.1-4, 9-14.

Psalm 72.1-4, 9-14 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

O give the King Your judgment, Lord,
and righteousness Your Son.

And let Him judge by Your good Word the need of everyone.

Let now the mountains ring with peace, the hills in righteousness.
Let justice rise, oppression cease, and all the needy bless.

And let the Righteous rule the earth, and let His foes bow low.
Let nations praise His matchless worth, and all His bidding do.

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace.
All they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

3 Only One Mediator

Pray Psalm 72.1-4.

Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's Son.
He will judge Your people with righteousness,
And Your poor with justice.
The mountains will bring peace to the people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.
He will bring justice to the poor of the people;
He will save the children of the needy,
And will break in pieces the oppressor.

Read and meditate on 1 Timothy 2.5-7.

Reflect.

1. What does Paul mean by “to be testified in due time”? Who’s supposed to do this testifying?
2. How did Christ fulfill the role of a Mediator between God and people?

Meditate.

Our prayers for people should certainly include the prayer that they might come to know Jesus as the only Mediator between God and men (v. 5). God desires all people to be saved (v. 4); and He sent Jesus to accomplish the salvation the world needs by giving Himself as a ransom on the cross.

That idea of Christ paying a ransom begs the question: To whom did He pay it? To whom was the payment due, that accomplished our release, and how was the payment made?

The payment due was death, which is the debt we all have incurred because of our sin (Rom. 3.23). The One to Whom that debt was paid is God Himself. We could not pay the debt we owe to God, at least, not in such a way as to *satisfy* that debt. Our sin requires *infinite* and *unending* death; and this is what Jesus accomplished on the cross, when He was separated from God the Father as the Sin-bearer of the world.

Jesus did *not* pay ransom to the devil, although the devil held us in chains of unbelief and lies before we were saved. He paid the debt to the Father, then He put the devil to shame (Col. 2.13-15); and He took us to Himself as the spoils of war (Matt. 12.22-29).

Because He has paid our debt, He is the only means of our salvation. Only He can mediate between us and God. As we appeal to Him, He intercedes for us, and salvation is the result. Our debt is canceled, and we are born again into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son. Now we know God and Jesus Christ, Whom He has sent as our Mediator. Now we know the truth about ourselves, life, the world, and true joy.

This is Good News, and such Good News must be proclaimed. The time has come (v. 6) for all who know this Good News to bear testimony of it, as Paul did, fulfilling His charge. We have a charge like Paul, and it includes knowing God and Jesus Christ so fully and truly that the life we have in Him wells up and overflows from within us (Jn. 7.37-39). Others will see our hope, so we must be ready to testify about the mediatorial work of Christ, and the canceled debt and the freedom of new life He has accomplished for us (1 Pet. 3.15).

Reflect.

1. Paul says there is “one God”. Why doesn’t everyone understand this? Does everyone have *some* god which they serve in their lives? Such as?
2. How would you summarize the content of what must “be testified in due time” to the people in your Personal Mission Field? What does “due time” look like?
3. Paul connects prayer for all people with testifying of the Good News. Is that your practice? How would you improve in this?

O the overflowing kindness and love of God toward man! God did not hate us, or drive us away, or bear us ill will. Rather, he was long-suffering and forbearing. In his mercy, he took up the burden of our sins. He himself gave up his own Son as a ransom for us—the holy one for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, the righteous one for the unrighteous, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. Anonymous (late 2nd century), Letter to Diognetus 9.1-2

Lord, give me an opportunity today to testify of the mediatorial work of Jesus, and help me to...

Pray Psalm 72.1-8

Pray for the lost in your Personal Mission Field, and throughout the world, that they might hear the Good News of Jesus, and through Him, come to know God and the blessings of His great salvation.

Sing Psalm 72.1-8.

Psalm 72.1-8 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

O give the King Your judgment, Lord, and righteousness Your Son.
And let Him judge by Your good Word the need of everyone.

Let now the mountains ring with peace, the hills in righteousness.
Let justice rise, oppression cease, and all the needy bless.

Let nations fear You while the sun and moon endure on high.
Refresh, renew us, every one, like sweet rain falling from the sky.

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus’ reign endures.
Let peace increase from sea to sea ‘til moonlight shall be no more.

4 The Duty of Christian Men

Pray 72.18, 19.

Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only does wondrous things!
And blessed be His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled *with* His glory.
Amen and Amen.

Read and meditate on 1 Timothy 2.8.

Reflect.

1. Should we care what Paul desires? Why?
2. What does Paul desire for Christian men?

Meditate.

Paul addresses the men of the churches in Ephesus, and by association, Christian men in all times and places. What does he desire for them?

That they should pray.

That they should pray *everywhere*.

That they should pray in holiness.

That they should pray in love, and without doubting.

As Christian men, we should ask ourselves, “Does this describe my practice of prayer?” Jesus told His disciples that they should *always* pray, and not grow weary in it (Lk. 18.1). Is that our practice? We can work toward achieving this high standard for our prayers if we will bring prayer into *every place and space* of our lives – all the nooks and crannies of our Personal Mission Field. Do you pray at home? In the car on your way to work? While you are working? In meetings? During conversations? Somehow, we have to learn to make prayer the continuous presence of our *every place* – like breathing. We may not always be speaking, but we must strive always to pray, and in every place.

But for our prayers to be effective, they must be offered up with *holy hands*. We must not harbor sin in our lives, or else the Lord won’t listen to our prayers (Ps. 66.18). A good portion of our time in prayer should be given to listening to the Lord as He searches us, and confessing any sins He makes known (Ps. 139.23, 24).

Let our prayers be saturated with love for God and for those for whom we intercede and give thanks. And let us not doubt the power and efficacy of prayer; rather, let us act on our prayers. Let us move in the direction of answered prayers, as though we actually believe God is going ahead of us to grant our requests. Let your life of prayer embolden your life of witness and service, and you will find that you pray even more out of wonder and thanks and praise for the Presence of God with you.

Men, if you’re not praying like this, you’re merely playing at being a Christian.

Reflect.

1. Why do you suppose Paul felt it was necessary to address this instruction specifically to men?
2. How does your prayer life compare with what Paul outlines here?
3. How can Christian men encourage and help one another to have better prayer lives?

Whenever we lift up pure hands in prayer, without diverting distractions or contention, we are playing to the Lord with a ten-stringed instrument. We play, as the psalmist wrote, "with ten-stringed instrument and lyre, with melody upon the harp." Our body and soul and spirit—our harp—are all in harmony, all their strings in tune. Jerome (347-420), Homilies on the Psalms 21

Help me, Lord, to work harder at my prayer life, beginning today, as I...

Pray Psalm 72.18-20.

How many "wondrous things" can you think of for which you can praise and bless the Lord?

Sing Psalm 72.18-20.

Psalm 72.18-20 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

Let Christ be praised and all the gold of Sheba be His right.

Let blessings to His Name be told, and prayers made both day and night.

And let the earth abound with grain, let fields His fame proclaim.

And may our King forever reign and nations bless His great Name.

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.

And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forever more!

5 And You Ladies

Pray 72.1-3.

Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's Son.
He will judge Your people with righteousness,
And Your poor with justice.
The mountains will bring peace to the people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.

Read and meditate on 1 Timothy 2.9-11.

Reflect.

1. What are Christian women supposed to profess? How should they do that?
2. Why is it wise and proper for a woman to “learn in silence with all submission”?

Meditate.

Paul turns from addressing the men of the church and their duty and calling to pray, to speak a word to the ladies of the congregation. To some of us, Paul's instructions here may seem unreasonable, demeaning, or outdated. But are they? Is Paul demeaning women in the role he prescribes for them in the church? Or is he elevating them to their proper place of leadership, both in Christian life and Christian learning?

First, nothing could be more “everyday” than how we dress. Paul calls on women to be modest in their clothing, and to exercise propriety and moderation in how they dress. These words, *αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης*, *aidous kai sophrosunes*, indicate showing respect for others, and thinking carefully and appropriately – that is, like a follower of Christ. The focus, in other words, is to be on others and how a woman should affect them by her appearance. Since showing Christ's love and glory to the world is the end of all Christian learning (1 Tim. 1.5; 1 Cor. 10.31), how women dress can be a continuous, in “every place” (v. 8), witness to the beauty, decency, and humility of Christ. Instead of drawing attention to themselves with their clothing, or how they arrange their hair or the accessories they use, Christian women should dress with the question in mind, “How can I show Christ to my neighbor?”

How a woman presents herself is central to her witness; she is a continuous advertisement for godliness and good works. Paul does not say this of men. He says it of women, and that probably because the world tends to look at women in the wrong ways. And women sometimes tend to present themselves in ways other than what Paul prescribes here. Paul is not commending plainness; he is telling women how to express the true beauty of Christ, in ways that will show godliness and good works to the world. Women, more than men, have this calling and opportunity, and they should make the most of it.

Paul also instructs women to “learn in silence with all submission.” He seems to be talking about when believers are gathered in church. Here again, Paul shows what women can teach the world about true learning. All true learning begins in silence before the Lord, listening to Him, contemplating His Word, not challenging or offering our opinions or touting our views or otherwise talking just to hear ourselves talk – things which men like Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1.20) are always too ready to do. And isn't this what so often happens in churches? Everyone wants their share of the limelight. We all want to speak our minds, and as we do, we're talking over Jesus, Who wants us to “Be still” and know that *He* is God (Ps. 46.10). Women in church play an important role by learning *in silence*, reminding us all how we should learn to know the Lord; and by submitting to what they hear from the Lord, without qualification, without compromise or condition, and without hesitation – which, again is how we *all* should learn the Lord.

Christian women have a special opportunity to show the world both the beauty and godliness of the Christian life, and the way to increase in these by learning in silence and all submission. When women are faithful and consistent in their unique calling, they serve as a continuous witness to the world and a reminder to the Church of what it means to know and grow in the Lord. Is this a demeaning role? Hardly.

Reflect.

1. Paul wants Christian women to realize their full Gospel potential, in church and in the world. Explain.
2. Is Paul completely against a nice hairdo and some appropriate jewelry or cosmetics? Explain.
3. What can Christian men do to help the women in their lives fulfill this unique and holy calling as witnesses to godliness and sanctification?

*Let us then hold fast modesty and that moderation which adds to the beauty of the whole of life. For it is no light thing in every matter to preserve due measure and to bring about order, wherein that is plainly conspicuous which we call "decorum," or what is seemly. This is so closely connected with what is virtuous that one cannot separate the two.... This seemliness which we offer to God we may believe to be far better than other things. Ambrose of Milan (333-397), *Duties of Clergy* 1.45.219, 220.*

Lord, I pray for the women in my life, in our church, and Christian women everywhere, that...

Pray Psalm 72.1-8.

Which of the blessings mentioned here does the Lord want to channel to others through you? Seek His wisdom, strength, and grace accordingly.

Sing Psalm 72.1-8.

Psalm 72.1-8 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

O give the King Your judgment, Lord, and righteousness Your Son.
And let Him judge by Your good Word the need of everyone.

Let now the mountains ring with peace, the hills in righteousness.
Let justice rise, oppression cease, and all the needy bless.

Let nations fear You while the sun and moon endure on high.
Refresh, renew us, every one, like sweet rain falling from the sky.

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures.
Let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

6 Men and Women in Church

Pray 72.8-11.

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.
Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him,
And His enemies will lick the dust.
The kings of Tarshish and of the isles
Will bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seba
Will offer gifts.
Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him;
All nations shall serve Him.

Read and meditate on 1 Timothy 2.12-15.

Reflect.

1. Why does Paul appeal to the creation of Adam and Even in these verses? What does he want us to understand?
2. What does it mean to “have authority” in the church?

Meditate.

Paul’s understanding of the roles of men and women is rooted in the creation account of Genesis 1-3. God does nothing haphazardly. He is the God of order, and the order He has established is for the best and most fruitful working of His creation. It might not be the order you or I would prefer, but we do well to listen to the Word of God, rather than our own best ideas.

This is clear from the account of the fall into sin. Adam was created first, and God spoke His will to Adam concerning his purpose and the parameters within which he was to fulfill that purpose. Adam was responsible for what happened in the garden, and he had the authority – given to him from God – to ensure the right outworking of God’s will.

He failed in his responsibility by not guarding the garden against a voice contrary to the revealed Word of God (Gen. 2.15; 3.1-6). He stood by – literally – and allowed the voice of rebellion and disorder to *usurp his God-given authority* and bring disaster upon him, his family, and all creation.

The Church is the new garden of Eden, where God has placed His people so that they might fill the earth with followers of His Son, and bring out His goodness, beauty, and truth in all areas of life. In this new garden, God has established authority and responsibility. He knows what He’s doing, and He knows how best to accomplish His purposes. There will always be voices suggesting other or better ways of “doing church”. But when those voices contradict God’s Word, they must be opposed, or the results will be disorder and disaster.

We have seen that God has a high calling for women – a holy calling to sublime beauty, and demonstrated submission to Him, so that godliness and good works might abound. Likewise, God has a calling for men, just as He did for Adam, to have authority in the garden to guard the garden against false teaching (1 Tim. 1), and to teach the Word of God, so that the beauty and goodness of God can flourish – through women and men, and the work, culture, and witness they pursue together.

Life in God's new garden can be painful, and much of that pain is the residue of Adam's first failure of duty. But new life can thrive and flourish through pain – as it does through the pain of childbirth – if men and women (“they”, v. 15) will “continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control”.

And if we think we have better ideas than God, or that the voices of rebellion and disorder in our age know better than God how His garden should grow, then we need to remember Adam, and send those voices packing. Men who yield to disorderly, worldly, and self-serving voices, rather than hold fast to God's Word, are not fit to rule in the church, as Paul will elaborate in 1 Timothy 3.

Reflect.

1. How is the Church like the garden of Eden? What did God intend for that garden? What does He intend for His Church?
2. Whenever we find ourselves questioning or disagreeing with the revealed Word of God, what should we do?
3. For both men and women to flourish, and for God's beauty, goodness, and truth to abound, is it better to hold fast to the Word of God, or to accommodate contrary voices? Explain.

You see Eve was not subjected in her original condition as she was made. Nor was she called to submission when God first brought her to the man. She did not hear anything from God then about submissiveness. Nor did Adam originally say any such word to her. Rather he said indeed that she was “bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,” but of rule or subjection he mentioned nothing. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on 1 Corinthians 26.2

O Lord, let Your Word be the last word for me on all matters of faith and life, and guard me against thinking that...

Pray Psalm 72.7-14.

How will you seek the Kingdom and rule of God today, that it might come on earth, through your life, as it exists in heaven?

Sing Psalm 72.7-14.

Psalm 72.7-14 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures.

Let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

And let the Righteous rule the earth, and let His foes bow low.
Let nations praise His matchless worth, and all His bidding do.

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace.
All they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

7 Prayer and Piety

Pray 72.17, 18.

His name shall endure forever;
His name shall continue as long as the sun.
And *men* shall be blessed in Him;
All nations shall call Him blessed.
Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only does wondrous things!

Review 1 Timothy 2.

Reflect.

1. Why does Paul put such emphasis on men praying?
2. Why does he focus on women when it comes to piety and good works?

Meditate.

Paul's instructions to Timothy, who was pastor in the churches in Ephesus, is on how to build a church that grows in unity and maturity in Jesus Christ (Eph. 4.11-16), and thus fulfills the Lord's agenda (Matt. 16.18). He begins where we might expect, by insisting on sound doctrine, sound teaching, and learning that issues in love, according to the Law of God (ch. 1). No church will grow as Jesus intends that does not have this as its foundation.

From there, Paul speaks to the men of the church, calling them to pray – all kinds of prayer, for all kinds of situations, in all kinds of places. Men praying is the key to the church becoming a house of prayer, and God bringing the blessings of faith and obedience to His people.

As the men pray and learn to love like Jesus, the women are called to model true submission to the Lord in learning by living godly and pious lives that draw attention not to themselves, but to Jesus. Their godliness and good works are the mortar the Spirit uses to build Christ's churches with enduring strength.

Every member of the church – men and women – needs to remember that God has established the best working order for His economy and His people. We question or ignore or compromise or bypass that order to our own peril, as Adam and Eve sadly discovered. The church is the new garden of Eden, and God, through His apostles, teaches us how to maximize our participation in the Body of Christ so that the goodness and glory of God abound.

In chapter 3, Paul will further elaborate the Lord's plan for building the Church of our Lord Jesus for His glory.

Reflect.

1. If Adam had prayed in all places at all times about all things – that is, if he had kept continuous communion with the Lord about His priorities and will – do you think the events of Genesis 3.1-6 might have worked out differently? Explain.
2. If Eve had refused to listen to the voice of disagreement and disorder, and had submitted in silence to God's Word – rather than chatting away with the serpent – do you think the events of Genesis 3.1-6 might have worked out differently? Explain.

3. Why is it reasonable to suppose that God's order for His churches – His garden – should be preferred to our best ideas or the changing winds of the times?

Drawing near to God, we give thanks for the whole world and the good things we commonly share. The blessings of God are shared in common, and in this common preservation you yourselves are included. Consequently, you both owe common thanksgivings for your own peculiar blessings and for those shared in common with others, for which you rightly should offer your own special form of praise. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on Second Corinthians 2.5

Show me, Lord, how You intend to use me in building Your Church, and help me today to...

Pray Psalm 72.

This psalm addresses the petition, “Thy Kingdom come...on earth...” Here David prays that Solomon – and more distantly, the Messiah – may realize in their reigns the full blessings God has promised in His covenant. As you pray, thank the Lord for evidence of the Kingdom coming in your life, and ask Him to show you how to seek more of the Kingdom today.

Sing Psalm 72.

Psalm 72 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

O give the King Your judgment, Lord, and righteousness Your Son.
And let Him judge by Your good Word the need of every one.

Let now the mountains ring with peace, the hills in righteousness.
Let justice rise, oppression cease, and all the needy bless.

Let nations fear You while the sun and moon endure on high.
Refresh, renew us, every one, like sweet rain falling from the sky.

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures.
Let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

And let the Righteous rule the earth, and let His foes bow low.
Let nations praise His matchless worth, and all His bidding do.

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace.
All they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

Let Christ be praised and all the gold of Sheba be His right.
Let blessings to His Name be told, and prayers made both day and night.

And let the earth abound with grain, let fields His fame proclaim.
And may our King forever reign and nations bless His great Name.

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.
And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forevermore!

Prayer and Piety: 1 Timothy 2

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why does Paul emphasize the importance of men praying?
2. How should men pray? With what results in mind?
3. How can women best bear witness in godliness and good works?
4. What can women teach us about how to learn?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from 1 Timothy 2? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.