

## Developing a Global Gospel View

1 Timothy 1:20-2:1-3

*“...God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved...”*

**Introduction:** Some have described life as a series of spinning plates, the kind you would see balancing on the end of a stick. In order to keep a plate spinning, it needs enough energy and rotations to remain upright, and if it loses speed it will simply crash to the floor. In our individual lives, we have many plates to spin: work life, balancing budgets, home life, trying to eat right and exercise, spending time with our kids, wife, friends, and serving, while we feed our souls from God's Word, disciplining ourselves to pray, fellowship, and spend time seeking the Lord. Without proper prioritization, this can seem like an exhausting venture, where we are constantly spinning plates, reacting rather than thriving.

For a church body, there is a similar tension. We want to care for each other, serve, pray, love, forgive, bear with, and encourage one another relationally, while we seek to know more about God and His Word, pursuing holiness and worship, while striving to do good in our culture, reaching our neighbors with the gospel, and caring for missionaries overseas. And the plates continue to spin. How do we make sure we spin the right plates, and make sure that none of our plates hit the floor? We have to make sure we prioritize correctly and use the resources God has given us.

We saw in 1 Timothy 1 that Timothy needed to set the church leadership in order, making sure that they were **teaching proper doctrine and living from a good conscience**. We will see this morning that Paul had to take seemingly harsh measures to ensure this, to a degree that some might think the Church is a harsh place that does not about people. Yet we will see also that Paul quickly moves to making sure the church at Ephesus knew her mission and fulfilled it. What Paul would have pointed out is that the plates the church needs to spin are **NOT disconnected, but the spinning of one creates the power to spin the others**. *If a church is healthy within it will be able to reach out*. So giving leaders over to Satan (yikes) is NOT disconnected from reaching the lost. Doing one helps achieve the other.

### Purity Within FREES Effectiveness Outside (1:20)

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,<sup>19</sup> holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,<sup>20</sup> among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, **whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme**.

### God's Sovereign Purpose in Handing People to Satan

Admittedly, at first glance, verse 20 seems overly harsh and even out of place. If the goal of the charge was LOVE, how could handing someone over to Satan be loving? The answer to the question is seeing this action in the whole of the context. Not only does God take false teaching seriously, but disciplining those who are false teachers is both **protective** for the body and **corrective** for the individual. Before we unpack that idea, it's good to refresh ourselves as to the nature of **God's interaction with Satan**. Satan is our foe and enemy, he is a liar and has a great amount of delegated authority on this earth. He is a schemer who in the Prince of the power of this world, but HE IS NOT THE FINAL AUTHORITY. He cannot do anything outside of God's will, and God accomplishes His ultimate purposes through the schemes of Satan (see: Satan entering Judas, selling Jesus out, Jesus goes to the cross, Jesus wins!). So it is good to remember that when God **gives someone over to Satan**, even a believer, it is to accomplish His ultimate purpose:

- **As seen in the life of Job** (Job 1-2; 1:11; 2:6, 2:10) - God shows His purpose through Satanic attack *that faith and godliness are not dependant on positive circumstances*

The story of Job is about suffering, but that is NOT the ultimate lesson, rather the setting for the drama that transpired behind the scenes between God and Satan, a drama that Job did not and could not see. When God approached Satan about His blameless and upright servant named Job, Satan mocked that the only reason Job feared God was because of the **hedge of protection and blessings God gave him**. In other words, "of course he worships You, You've given him only good in life and ease." **But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face** (Job 1:11). So Satan did. He took everything away from Job except his health and wife. Job's response: *tore his robe, shaved his head, fell to the ground, and worshipped....the Lord gives, He takes away, blessed be the name of the LORD.*

But Satan was not satisfied. **"Stretch out your hand and touch his bone and flesh, and he will curse your face."** So Satan delivered painful boils from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. Job's response: ***Shall we receive good from God and shall we not receive evil*** (distress, misery, calamity). ***What was God doing through Satan?*** Not only refining Job, but showing that *true godliness, true faith and godly fear are NOT dependant on favorable circumstances, but on His persevering power.*

- **As seen in the life of Jesus** (Matthew 4:1-11) - God used Satanic attack to prove Jesus' character, that He would stand true as the perfect and obedient God-Man

Satan thought he had gained the upper hand on Jesus after Jesus had fasted for 40 days, was hungry, and was led **by the Holy Spirit to the wilderness** (think desert, not trees) to be tempted by Satan. He questioned whether He was truly the Son of God (v. 3 and 6) and offered Him the kingdoms of the world and their glory, for the small stipulation that He would fall down and worship Satan (v. 8-9). Jesus not only showed the power of God's Word to thwart the temptations of Satan (which is exactly what we are to do today), but proved that He was the perfect and obedient God-Man, our High Priest who was tempted in every way like us, yet without sin.

- **As seen in the life of Paul** (2 Cor. 12:1-10) - God used Satanic attack to keep Paul humble and dependant on His grace, to operate by the strength God provided, not his own

Paul was privy to visions and revelations from the Lord Himself, and in this was given great responsibility but easily reason to boast. ***"So to keep me from becoming conceited, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited."*** Three times Paul prayed to take the messenger away, but God answered "no". So Paul instead yielded revealed in the fact that God's grace is sufficient and power is actually perfected in **weakness**, gaining insight that many wise and mature believers have gained as bodies begin to break: ***I am content in weaknesses, for when I am weak, then I am strong.*** Satan loved the fact that he could inflict pain on God's servant, but God used this for His own purposes, to humble his servant and make him effective in his task.

- **As seen in the life of Peter** (Luke 22:31-33) - God used Satanic attack to show that even if there was failure on the part of man, God would not fail in securing faith for His own.

Finally, we remember how Satan asked for Peter, to sift him like wheat to cause his faith to fail on the night that Jesus was arrested and He went to the cross. Jesus obliged (which I'm not sure I'd have wanted!), and allowed Satan access to Peter. We know the story: Peter **failed, big time, in denying and swearing that he even knew Jesus**. Jesus restored him after His resurrection to minister to His church, but also showed a powerfully clear principle: ***Satan could shake Peter, but God would not allow His faith to be shaken free***. Man may fail along the way, but God will not. When we have small faith or struggle to believe, He still holds us and never lets go.

***What's the point:*** Satan is ultimately under the authority of God, and when he acts with evil intent, even to believers, God is still accomplishing His will in the life of the oppressed.

### **God's Protective Purpose in Discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-2; 5-7)**

It is actually reported that there is **sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans**, for a man has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup>And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you... Your boasting is not good. **Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** <sup>7</sup>Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Now the closest parallel we have to what Paul did to Hymenaeus and Alexander is found in 1 Corinthians 5, a church that was full of problems. One of the major problems was the fact that they did **NOT discipline or take care of members in their church that were openly in sin, the kind of sin that unsaved neighbors would have blushed at**. Not only did this lack of action misunderstand the call of the gospel to a pure life, but it grossly misunderstood the devastating effects of sin in the church. Sin never stays in its box or lane, but will affect the whole. Leaven permeates bread in a way that is not seen but absolutely noticed. To have this kind of open sin with a professing believer would begin to permeate other relationships as well as create a dissonance of witness to the world around. Having the sinner repent was the hope, but if he ceased from the sin, he'd have to be put out of the church for the health of the whole.

### **God's Corrective Purpose in Discipline (1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-8)**

... **you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord**...I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—  
10 not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 **But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.** 12 **For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?** 13 God judges those outside.  
“Purge the evil person from among you.”

But this step of discipline is also corrective. The member would be put out of the protection of the leadership and family of the church and put into the **sphere of Satan**. There is blessing within the family of God as God's Spirit moves, God answers prayer, and love is expressed together. The sinner would be put out into the sphere of Satan as the last **tool in the toolbox** to call him back to repentance. For this person in Corinth, there was a willingness to see him suffer in the short term, either health wise or circumstantially, in order that God would save him in the end. We actually believe that this scenario played out and in 2 Corinthians 2, this man repented and came back, and the church was to **forgive**,

**comfort, and reaffirm him.** In the case in Ephesus, the goal of handing these men over to the sphere of Satan was to **teach or train** these men to stop blaspheming in their teaching.

**What do we learn from this:** 1) A holy church is an effective church (2 Tim. 2:21). Without dealing with our sin, we cannot begin to reach the world with a transforming gospel. 2) We **DO judge those inside the church** (with a differentiation between *being judgmental and judging*) It is those outside the church that we do not hold to a Biblical standard, but everyone who claims to be a believer and part of the church places themselves under the authority of Scripture. 3) Thus, those inside the church can expect discipline in ways we would never to those outside. I discipline my children much differently than yours.

What seems harsh from a first or outside look truly has to do with the purity of the gospel and our witness to the larger world. Paul transitions from this first section to then clarify **how the church should operate**, and though it seems dissonant, moving from handing someone over to Satan to praying for the world is intimately tied together.

### Prayer Within FUELS Effectiveness Outside (2:1-3)

**First of all, then, I urge** that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings **be made for all people,** <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,

### Gospel Fueled Prayer is Essential For Our Mission

Paul moves into both the churches mission and prayer life. Our mission is clear: *we are to make disciples of all nations, teaching them and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.* We are to call people to repentance through the gospel of Jesus Christ to **follow Jesus**, to be a learner of Him to glorify the Father. But we can all resonate with the fact that this is a difficult task, or at least one that is hard to keep on the front burner. We have lives, homes, jobs, bills, kids, and pressure, on top of serving in the church, reading God's Word, and fellowshiping with each other. This can lead to a frenetic pace of life where we not only have no time to rest but also have a hard time keeping priorities straight. If there is a spiritual battle raging, it would seem that Satan would love to see the church **busy and distracted**, not in doing BAD things, but certainly **lesser things**. Get us off our mission and we are merely a nice club, a social gathering of nice people. This is why what Paul addresses with the church at Ephesus was **fundamental and foundational to the mission of the church: how it prays!**

This has been a profoundly convicting passage for me personally (not that having a clear conscience was a walk in the park!). The whole of the first part of chapter 2 is the churches call to pray for the whole world in terms of the salvation, a **global initiative to pray for every tribe, tongue and nation**, that God would save. This is clear in the context, especially in verse 4, which says that God desires all people to be saved (which we will unpack next week ---- *teaser*) I've had to ask myself: *if God would wildly answer my prayer from the last week/month/year, who would be saved? What would I actually receive in the fulfillment of my prayer? Health? A good day? Blessed food?*

John Stott told this story:

*"Some years ago I attended public worship in a certain church. The pastor was absent on holiday, and a lay elder led the pastoral prayer. He prayed that the pastor might enjoy a good vacation (which is fine), and that two lady members of the congregation might be healed (which was also fine; we should pray for the sick). But that was all. The intercession can hardly have lasted thirty seconds. I came away*

*saddened, sensing that this church worshipped a little village god of their own devising. There was no recognition of the needs of the world, and no attempt to embrace the world in prayer.”<sup>1</sup>*

- **Content of Gospel Driven Prayer**

Notice that Paul gave this issue “first importance” when it came to corporate gatherings, something that he commanded rather than suggested. I don’t think we’d argue that prayer is important in our life or that it shouldn’t be a primary action, but I’m not sure “*what*” we pray for is always clear. There are **4 descriptions of prayer** here, each one describing an aspect of gospel driven prayer.

- 1) **Supplications** – This word has to do with **need**, the root word coming from a “lack or being deprived of something.” In gospel driven prayer, it is a reminder of the great need that others have for salvation, the lack of hope with which they are living.
- 2) **Prayers** – This is a general word for prayer, but it is always directed toward God. It carries the idea of worship and reverence, coming to God in fear rather than flippancy.
- 3) **Petitions** – The idea is a description of prayer that has free access to God with childlike confidence while we plead on behalf of others. It has a sense of advocacy, empathy, compassion, sympathy, and involvement.
- 4) **Thanksgiving** – A spirit of gratitude to God for the extension of grace in the gospel. Thanksgiving to God should color every one of our prayers (Phil. 4:6), and reminds us that nothing can happen outside of His will and power.

- **Scope of Gospel Driven Prayer**

There are two groups that are to be prayed for, one broad and one specific:

- 1) **All people** – We are to pray for all people, even those we do not know. It was clear in this command that one of the teachings of the false teachers was the wrong kind of **exclusivity**. The gospel is exclusive on its own, with the gateway of salvation being regeneration and saving faith. But the false teachers were adding to that mix, saying one had to keep the finer points of the Law or have some sort of secret knowledge to gain salvation and access to the church. People had to become LIKE THEM before they could receive salvation. So the reminder to the church is that we have a **global call**, a desire to see all people come to Christ. Prayer is what lifts our head and perspective in the midst of busy distractions. Our minds and hearts follow our prayer life, and though we cannot reach everyone personally, we certainly can pray for them. One of the reasons that the church universal loses its evangelistic and missional edge is that she stops praying for the most important things. When prayer stops, so do our efforts, squeezed out by many other good and lesser things.
- 2) **Kings and those in authority** - A subset of the call to pray for all was prayer on behalf of those in political authority over the people of the church. This brings clarity on a few levels. **First**, it is a reminder that God is the ultimate authority over governmental structures (Rom. 13:1) so rather than fighting against the government the church is called to submit, including the paying of taxes (Rom. 13:5-6) knowing that God raises up and tears down kings (Daniel 2:21). **Second**, since the ruler of the day of Paul's writing was **Nero**, and since Nero was evil and wicked to his own people and Christians alike, it was not the merit of the person that warranted prayer, and **Third**, the prayer offered was that of salvation for the king or authority figure. It was not a

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<sup>1</sup> John Stott, *Guard the Truth*, p. 61.

prayer for the rising up of a political party or the implementation of a particular agenda. It meant fervent prayer for repentance and faith of kings.

**NOTE:** As a principle, does this characterize our political involvement? This does NOT exclude a Christian's activity in the process, especially in a country like ours that welcomes it. However, the transcendent principle in ALL areas for ALL time is that we are commanded to pray for salvation for those over us. What would be different about our attitudes if we implemented this? What would that do for how we viewed those in opposition?

### **Gospel Fueled Prayer Walks With Godly Living**

The best advertisement for Christianity is Christians. The story is told of Thomas Huxley:

*"As far as we know, Thomas Huxley, the famous agnostic, never put his faith in Christ, but he did experience some degree of conviction. Toward the end of his life, Huxley was a guest at a retreat in a country home. Sunday came, and most of the guest went to church. Naturally, Huxley did not go. Alone he approached a man known to have **simple and radiant Christian faith**. Huxley said, 'Suppose you don't go to church today. Suppose you stay at home and you tell me quite simply what your Christian faith means to you and why you are a Christian.' 'But,' the man said, 'you could demolish my arguments in an instant. I am not clever enough to argue with you.' Huxley gently replied, 'I don't want to argue with you; I just want you to tell me simply what this Christ means to you.' The man stayed and did as Huxley had requested. When he finished, there were tears in the old agnostic's eyes."<sup>2</sup>*

We pray that God would save those in political power **so that we can live:**

**Peaceful** lives, which means the "absence of outside disturbances"

**Quiet lives**, which means the absence of *internal* disturbances.

This is similar to the charge of **1 Thessalonians 4:10b-11**, "*But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before **outsiders** and be dependent on no one.*"

Far from being a prayer of ease and comfort, this is a prayer that would see the church be able to play out its mission to the world without needless disruption. Paul followed that up with a focus on **godliness**, which would be a proper *attitude and reverence to God*, and **dignity**, which would be a *moral earnestness and proper behavior in the world*. Paul knew that anyone desiring to live a godly life would face persecution (2 Tim. 3:17), and that we are still to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:43-44). The prayer was NOT that we would be people who avoided conflict, but who only endured the right kind. It meant that the church should not be known as a thorn in the side of governments or communities but blessings. Our church should seek to bless Simi Valley, who is known to care for the lowly and love our neighbors, and if we are to be rejected, hated, and persecuted (which we will!) we make sure it is for the TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, not the way we act.

### **Gospel Fueled Prayer Trusts the Heart of God**

What would be different about your life, this church, and the world if God answered all your prayer? Would we see revival? How have our lives demonstrated the fundamental mission of our church to reach the world with the gospel?

<sup>2</sup> Kent Hughes, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, p. 60.