

Focus on 1 Timothy 2:1–7

Semicontinuous Jer.
8:18–9:1 Ps. 79:1–9

Complementary
Amos 8:4–7 Ps.
113

1 Tim. 2:1–7

Luke 16:1–13

WHAT is important to know? —From “*Exegetical Perspective*” by Mitchell G. Reddish The instructions in 2:1–7 stress the universality or inclusiveness of Christian prayer. Readers are exhorted to pray “for everyone,” including “all who are in high positions,” because God desires to save

“everyone” and Christ gave himself a ransom “for all.” Some interpreters have suggested that this emphasis on inclusiveness reflects an intentional corrective to gnostic attitudes that one should pray for only certain people (those in possession of special knowledge, or “gnosis”); others have proposed that the author was exhorting the readers to pray for individuals in their community who were teaching false doctrines and encouraging errant lifestyles.

WHERE is God in these words? —From “*Theological Perspective*” by Stephanie Mar Smith This passage points us toward the theological basis for prayer and intercession: the mediation of Christ. The word “intercession,” *deēseis*, is derived from a verb with the meaning “to have the good fortune to be admitted to an audience [with a king].” Verse 5 spells out the basis for this good fortune: “there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus.” Prayer is not something we perform in our own autonomous will. Rather, like intercession, prayer is an act resulting from the good fortune that Christ intercedes on our behalf (Heb. 6:20; 7:25–28; 8:1–6).

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “*Pastoral Perspective*” by Jane
Anne Ferguson

Our parishioners will be called by the God of 1 Timothy to love and to pray for those outside churches as well, those who are radically different from themselves and those who may frighten them. It is not easy to pray for the terrorist who plots against our country or the rapist who assaulted a loved one, but if we are fervent in our prayers we will be called to see that person as a child of God, a person created in God’s own image just as we are, a person God desires to save. Our prayers will change us.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “*Homiletical Perspective*” by
William P. “Matt” Matthews

There is a barrier between this text and us. When Paul invites Timothy to give thanks for “everyone,” there is a presumption that there is something in “everyone” for which to be thankful in the first place. Not everyone believes this is true. In a world of mean-spirited, us-them, simplistic right-wrong thinking, our flock needs reminding that “everyone” for whom we pray is worthy of God’s help and blessing and, likewise, our prayers for them are decidedly worth our breath.

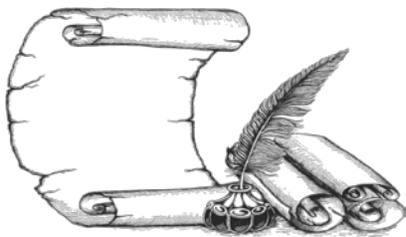
Pastoral Letters

This week we begin a three-session study of passages from 1 and 2 Timothy. Together with Titus, these letters are known as the Pastoral Epistles, because they give guidance on caring for the church and on giving pastoral oversight to congregations.

They are written as if by Paul to Timothy. Experts continue to debate the authorship of these letters. Some believe that Paul indeed wrote all three letters. Others believe that perhaps a disciple of Paul wrote the epistles, because the style and vocabulary are quite different from Paul's other writings and because the church that is reflected in the letters seems to be more highly organized than was the case in Paul's day. Many experts believe that Paul did write at least 2 Timothy, which is the most personal of the three letters, and we will follow that assumption in our study.

The letters have two main themes:

First, the letters deal with false teaching that is threatening the truth of the gospel in the churches. This false teaching seems to have been a form of Gnosticism in which false interpretations were being made by people who claimed to be teaching the Jewish law. Gnosticism was a heretical movement of the second century that used Greek philosophy to interpret the Christian faith. Adherents believed that material things were evil and that the world was created by a lesser god, not the true God. They held that salvation was attained by knowledge (*gnosis* in Greek). This secret knowledge, and thus salvation, belonged only to an exclusive group of truly spiritual people. Gnostics either avoided contact with the world as much as possible or became libertines on the assumption that behavior in the earthly sphere was of little importance. The author of the letters argues vociferously against such erroneous and exclusivist teachings, and emphasizes the importance of preaching and teaching the true gospel grounded in Jesus Christ, who died for all people.



Second, the letters deal with a number of practical concerns: church organization, structure, and unity; qualifications of church leaders; the role of women (especially widows) in the church; and social ministry, such as serving the poor. The letters also deal with matters of daily Christian living such as prayer, the use of money, and maintaining faith when discouraged— all of which are as pertinent today as they were in the early church.