

HOW TO WORSHIP GOD

1 Timothy 2:1-15

Key Verse: 5 “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”

What is worship? It can be understood in various ways. What would you say about worship? In today’s passage, Paul touches two aspects of worship: first, God - He is the main focus in worship and He should be pleased by our worship, and second, the men and women who worship God. May God enlighten us by the Holy Spirit.

1. One God and one mediator (1-7).

First, God wants all men to be saved (1-4).

Paul indicated in 1:3, when he went into Macedonia, he commissioned Timothy as a pastor and shepherd to take care of the Church in Ephesus. This church had many problems and none of them was easy for Timothy to deal with. He was young and inexperienced. Besides, he wasn’t a product of Ephesus but was from Lystra. He might not have been fully welcomed by the congregation there. Knowing Timothy and the church very well, what did Paul say? Look at verses 1 and 2. “¹I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” Did we hear this right? Did he say that Timothy should just pray for all people? Shouldn’t he suggest a way he could really get involved? You know, a way that Timothy and we could do something that would make a real difference. Paul’s urge to pray is “first of all.” Paul urged Timothy, as of first importance or before doing anything else, to devote himself to prayer for everyone. Prayer is truly doing something. Prayer is doing something mighty and powerful. Prayer makes a tremendous difference. The amazing fact is God has chosen to work in response to the prayers of His people. That’s why Paul says to Timothy, “I urge you! Pray!”

Prayer is not a nicety in the Christian life, but it’s an absolute necessity. God is sovereign and He accomplishes His will, yet His sovereign plan includes prayers of His people. If we are involved with God’s plan for the world, then we will be praying in line with His plan.

What do you pray for? More importantly, whom do you pray for? Not only do we need all kinds of prayer, but also we need to pray for all kinds of people. “I urge you that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made

for everyone.” No person is too far gone or too lost in sin that God's grace cannot reach them. Nor is there any person so high and mighty or in a position of power and influence that he does not need God's grace. All people are sinners. All people need to know Christ as Savior. Maybe we cannot speak to a certain person about God; maybe they wouldn't listen. But we can always speak to God about that person; God always listens.

Let's read verses 3 and 4. ³This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” Here, Paul's concern was to counter the Jewish person who said that God wishes to destroy sinners and salvation is only for the elite. But Paul said, “No! God desires to save all men.” God is pleased with those who pray for the salvation of all men. Now we know God's heart's desire to save all men. Don't we? Then, let us pray for everyone and for the world salvation. Prayer makes a difference. It makes a mighty big difference. People who pray are changed, so are those whom we pray for. Prayer for all men is our act of worship to God.

Second, there is one God and one mediator (5-7).

What is the knowledge of the truth that saves all men in verse 4? Let's look at verses 5 and 6a, “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.” It is the clear teaching of Scripture that Jesus is the only mediator who brings God and man back together. Let's consider Jesus' own words in John 14:6. “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” We believe that Jesus is the only mediator between God and men. We believe that Jesus is the only way to the Father. Paul, in making this statement to a Greek audience, was very bold and risked offending some, since they served many gods. For instance, the city of Ephesus held the temple of a goddess Artemis (Diana). But if Jesus is the only mediator, that gives no saving credit to any other religions. They lead people nowhere. All other ways are dead ends, literally, dead ends.

Let's look at verses 5 and 6a more closely, “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.” What is a mediator? What does a mediator do? He works for conflict resolution between two parties who are in a hopelessly deadlocked confrontation. Do you remember that a couple years ago, Cumberland valley teachers went on strike against the school board?

The call for a mediator means the situation is out of control. So the job demands a person with excellent understanding of both parties in conflict, as well

as strong problem-solving and peace-making abilities. According to the Bible, we need a Mediator. Do you know what this means? It means that everything else has failed: the situation is out of control. This declares all human effort to be hopeless and useless. You cannot save yourself by going to church or by leading a good life or by doing good works. It means that on account of sin the relationship between God and men is so damaged, and the chasm between God and men is so great that only a mediator can bridge the gap. What did Jesus do as a mediator between God and men? Sin demands lifeblood. Because of our sin, we all deserve to be punished both now and in eternity. In order to save us, however, Jesus paid the price. The ransom he paid was himself: his own body and blood. He took the punishment for our sins. The wrath of God against our sins was poured out on him. He died in our place. Now God's justice was satisfied and we can live. As a mediator, then, Christ Jesus brings God and men together by giving himself as a ransom. "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This is the truth that saves all men (4b).

Let's look at verses 7. "And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles." Men and women, like Paul, who received God's salvation through Jesus Christ, are used by God to reach others. That's how it works. God uses those who have experienced His saving grace in Christ to proclaim and explain the message to others. In this way, God is glorified and worshipped.

2. As men and women who worship God. (8-15)

In this part, Paul moves on from the urgent need for prayer to a more practical matter. Paul gives Timothy detailed instructions on how men and women should conduct themselves as they gather in the church to worship God.

What he wrote here may bother some of you, in particular, women. But we should consider these. In these verses Paul is speaking directly to the problems in that specific Church. We are more 2000 years from the specific concerns that Paul is addressing. It's important that we know the context so that we can fully understand the problems specifically addressed by the Holy Spirit through Paul.

First, men, life up holy hands in prayer (8).

Look at verse 8. "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger and disputing." Back then, maybe even now, Greek men were very passionate and inclined to emotional outbursts. In Acts 19, for instance, a

silversmith Demetrius was upset about his poor idol-making business and complained against Paul. All men who heard him became furious and began shouting. Instantaneously, the whole city was in an uproar.

Paul is instructing them, and us, to open their clenched fists and raise them in the air to God. There should be no yelling or pushing or fighting in the worship sessions. A man's hands should be used only to worship God and not for anger or arguments. Paul told the men this because this was a specific problem in some of the new churches in Greece. He was not creating a new Christian law that all men should always raise their hands during every worship service, but emphasizing that they should have holy hands in church and use them to glorify God, not bring disgrace to him.

Second, women, continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety (9-15).

Look at verses 9-10. ⁹"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." While the men were prone to be arrogant and start fights with each other, even in church, the women were prone to show off, brag and gossip, even during church. Paul tells Timothy to instruct the men to knock it off, and does the same with the women and their issues. He tells them "Don't bring all your fancy clothes and hairdos and jewelry to church. It only takes the focus off of Christ and puts it on you. As one belonging to God, your good deeds should be enough for people to see." It doesn't mean you cannot wear nice clothes, do your hair, or wear makeup or jewelry. It is instruction to remember who is being worshiped: "(Conduct yourselves as) women who profess to worship God" (10). If what you wear takes the focus off of Jesus, distracts others, or is a stumbling block for those of weaker faith, you should reconsider it. And it's not instruction to women alone. It also doesn't only apply to your outward appearance. If how you behave and the way you talk distracts others, it is inappropriate in the place of worship to God. In those days, the pagan temples were loud and crazy places but Christ's church should be different. The God we worship deserves our respect and honor.

Look at verses 11-15. Paul is certainly not teaching that women are less loved or not loved by God. But what he is primarily saying is that there should be order in the church, and in this case, women were assuming authority and breaking this order. In trying to teach the men or tell them what to do, it caused disruption among the believers. They are instructed to learn in quietness and full submission. They are to continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

The passage as a whole calls for men and women to relate to one another in the church according to the standards of acceptability. In this way, both men and women should promote peace in church so that God may receive his due glory by our right worship.

In conclusion, our God wants all men to be saved. To do so, he sent his Son who gave himself as a ransom for all men. Jesus Christ is the one and only mediator between God and men. So we, who received his saving grace in Christ, are urged to pray for everyone and promote peace. This is our act of worship. Amen.