

1 Timothy Chapter 2

How Serious Is Corporate Prayer To Us?

Charles Spurgeon once rightfully said concerning prayer:

“Bretheren, we shall never see much change for the better in our churches in general till the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians.”

Gene Getz wrote on the same subject the following:

“The hallmark of western civilization has been rugged individualism. Because of our philosophy of life, we are used to the personal pronouns, I and me. We have not been taught to think in terms of we, our and us. Consequently we individualize many references to corporate experience in the New Testament, thus often emphasizing personal prayer, personal bibli study, personal evangelism, and personal Christian maturity and growth. The facts are that more are said in the book of Acts and the epistles, about corporate prayer, corporate learning of Biblical truth, corporate evangelism, and corporate Christian maturity and growth than about the personal aspects of these Christian disciplines. Don’t misunderstand. Both are intricately related. But the personal dimensions of Christianity are difficult to maintain and practice consistently unless they grow out of proper corporate experience on a regular basis. The emphasis in the scriptural record is clearly on corporate prayer being the context in which personal prayer becomes meaningful.”

Acts 1:8, 12-14

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey.

13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Acts 2:42-45

42 And they continued steadfastly in the

1. apostles' doctrine
2. and fellowship,
3. and in breaking of bread,
4. and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all [men], as every man had need.

When the church was full of God's Holy Spirit, they were in **corporate and constant prayer**. This was no **light or limited** experience with the first century church. This was common practice as seen in the Bible text itself. Ours is a problem, not of textual ignorance but a matter of being filled and led by the Spirit of God.

Certainly if we are Christians and are filled and led by the Spirit of God, then it goes without saying that He will lead us in the way that will fulfill God's plan and certainly that means prayer as much as with all of the other things that earmarked the church.

So if there is no compulsion to be with the people of God when they gather for prayer, then it is **obvious** that we can conclude that there is *no leading of God's spirit in that individual, but a grieving and quenching of Him.*

The early church made prayer a priority whereas we today simply do not. That is the simple truth.

Corporate prayer banishes fear within a church. When the apostles came to the church body and told them of the things that they suffered at the hands of the surrounding religious community, they prayed as a single unit, and rather than being afraid of the power of the enemy, they were energized with the power of God and increased in their boldness! Did they pray for protection for their leaders and for themselves? Not for a moment. Well what did they pray for?

Acts 4:29-30

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

They prayed for the power to continue in the work of God.

What was God's response?

Acts 4:31

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Acts 12:1-5

1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth [his] hands to vex certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put [him] in prison, and delivered [him] to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

*5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: **but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.***

One of the main evidences of a praying church is an expanding church. The result of prayer was an expanded ministry. T.W. Hunt wrote:

"If we examine the expansion of the church in the book of Acts and look at its prayers as recorded in Acts and the epistles, we see convincing proof of the power of prayer. The early church had innumerable obstacles--Christianity was unknown, and it was opposed by the authorities wherever it spread. It suffered constantly from false accusations and rumors, and it tended to attract the lower classes. Yet, by the end of first century, it had spread in exactly the geographical pattern commissioned by the Lord---Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Points in Europe and Asia Minor far distant from its seedbed. This rapid geographical and ideological shift could have been accomplished only by supernatural forces. The instrument of expansion was the church, and the force the church was using was prayer."

- ***Is corporate prayer important to you?***

If and when the church gathers together and you are there, *you should stop everything you think is important and pray*. Before you dare come and sit under the power of the word of God, *you should be on your knees and praying for your attitude to receive it*. One of the reasons why so much good preaching and teaching is not understood, missed, ignored and rejected, especially when it visits our lives, and we know it, especially when it reveals some shortcoming in our understanding of subject that we thought we knew about, is because our hearts are not made ready to receive it *because we do not pray for understanding or understanding hearts*. If congregational or small group prayer is not a priority, then there is something that is clearly wrong with your walk. *Private only prayer is not New Testament prayer*.

- ***If corporate prayer is not important to you, when will you become an active partner in it?***

There is no secret of gradual formula. The Scriptures are clear and we should obey them instantly. There is simply no Biblical excuse for those who simply do not attend corporate prayer. It is clearly a violation of the truth of God's word. If you could be here and cannot that understandable. If you could be here and will not, that's unBiblical and evil.

- ***If you are not in prayer, then how in the world will you know what is the heart of God for the direction of the body and for your own life in that direction?***

Hearing prayer is not praying. ***Praying is praying***. Being in the midst of prayer is not prayer, prayer is prayer. Prayer is a priority and I tell you that the church is ignorant on the priorities of the church. Prayer is the priority before anything is to go on at the gathering of the saints. Now with this in mind, let's go to chapter 2 of first Timothy and address this area of church prayer.

Prayer in the church in verses 1-8

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, [and] giving of thanks, be made for all men;

Something struck me about the beginning of this chapter. It would appear that false teachers and false teachings had made such inroads in the Ephesian church that the very core of church structure and or church function had eroded or at least was hindered a great deal. Paul

spends most of the remaining epistle addressing matters of church structure or function. When false teachers and false teachings begin to erode a church, you will find that public worship is wrong at the corporate level beginning with prayer. People either simply stop praying or they pray wrong. Why was it needful for Paul to address the proper mode of praying if genuine prayer was already going on? Why was it needful for Paul to address these issues in public worship if proper public worship was already going on? Some would have us to believe by their writings that what Paul wrote to Timothy was only a supplement, an add-on that Timothy was to fulfill of the work that Paul began in that church before he left. Are we to believe that after spending a number of years in the Ephesian church that Paul was not addressing this issue of public worship? I find the concept of that to be laughable. For example, the Thessalonian church knew more in six months than most modern churches know in a lifetime. Do you think that Paul would teach less to the Ephesians after being there for about three years? Please!

I am convinced even to a greater degree that false teachers and false teachings had made such inroads in the Ephesian church that the very core of church structure and or church function had eroded or at least was hindered a great deal. The way Paul ends the first chapter and leads into the beginning of chapter two is clear that the thoughts are not disconnected. Look at the last three verses of chapter one and read with that the first verse of chapter two.

1 Timothy 1:18-2:1

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

Because false teachers hindered the very core of public worship, Paul had to urge Timothy to restore it, beginning with prayer.

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, [and] giving of thanks, be made for all men;

I exhort therefore. These things being so (the things happening in chapter one, that is) I urge you, in the strongest sense of the word. I do not believe for a second that with all of the conflict and turmoil that was at that church that Paul's use of the word exhort was anything less than in the command mode. This was serious business and Paul was not going Timothy any suggestions here. The seriousness of the matter at hand determined the proper use of the word here.

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, [and] giving of thanks, be made for all men;

What was to be at the top of the list with Timothy as he was commanded to restore the means of proper public worship? Prayer, and not just praying, but proper prayer. I can assure you that the very last thing on many lists of matters of public worship as far as church structure is concerned is proper prayer. But Paul stated that prayer was to be at the top of the list. If you are in a church that is inundated with false teachers and false teaching, and there is a move to restore the church to her proper role for usability and God's glory, it had better begin with prayer *after the Scriptures are the only teaching in the church and all that is false is gone*. In fact, when the Scriptures are the only teaching in the church and that all that is false is gone, I can assure you that the people will be praying. Now notice the words, first of all. It means just that. First in the order of importance and priority is prayer. It also means first in time, place and order. Prayer is to open everything.

It is incredible how many people do not make it their business to open in any praying at all, and yet wonder why they never hear from God. How could you wonder about this? Many people miss opening prayers because they don't think it to be all that important. All they want to do is "*hear the word*". Well what makes **you** think that you can just waltz into the presence of God and hear His word so flippantly anyway? And by the way, if you were **truly** hearing the word, you would be in prayer meetings because that instruction comes from the word. Your problem is that you are nothing but a forgetful hearer of the word, deceiving yourself. If prayer is not important to you, then nothing of the Christian life is either. How in the world can you violate the word of God concerning the importance of prayer and then claim to be hearing from it? The very thought is absurd.

There are four modes or types of praying described here in this verse.