

DATE: July 18, 2010
TEXT: I Timothy 2:1-6 (v.4)
TITLE: "WHAT IS GOD ASKING OF YOU?"
SERIES: "HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE?" (#2 in series)

It has been said,

- Only in America are there handicap parking places in front of a skating rink.
- Only in America do drug stores make the sick walk all the way in the back to get their Prescriptions filled ... while healthy people can buy suntan lotion up front.
- Only in America do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a DIET coke.
- Only in America do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and fill our garages with junk.

AMERICA: On January 20th, in his inaugural address, President John F. Kennedy said "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country."

- What does God want you to do for America?
- What does God want you to do for Him?
- What is God asking of you?

I. (v.1-2) GOD WANTS YOU TO MAKE PRAYER YOUR PRIORITY

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – " (v.1)

1. How important is prayer?
2. For the apostle Paul, prayer is the priority, the first thing.
3. Based on what he had been saying to the church, Paul begins his instruction to the church with a passionate and urgent call to pray.
4. The words, "first of all" relate to primacy of importance.
5. Nothing is more important than prayer.
6. Prayer is a priority, for prayer is a necessity.
7. We need God's help and intervention.
8. This verse is one of the pivotal New Testament pronouncements on the priority, power and purpose of prayer.
9. Many of us would probably agree that prayer is a priority.
10. The challenge for each of us becomes, does the time we actually spend in prayer match how important we say and believe prayer is?
11. The practice of our prayer life reveals the reality of how important we believe prayer really is.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:6)

12. "...but in everything by prayer and petition..."
13. Prayer is to be our approach toward life.
14. The Message paraphrases this verse to read, "The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know."
15. Paul's meaning seems to be that prayer in all its forms should occupy the primary place in our lives.

EXAMPLE: In Acts 12:1-19, Peter had been put in prison by King Herod, who intended to put him to death. Listen to what the church was doing. "So Peter was kept in prison but the church was earnestly praying to God for him." (Acts 12:5). The rest of the chapter tells us an angel of the Lord appeared, woke Peter up, then the chains fell off that held him to a guard at each wrist, and, as the angel led them out, the iron gate opened up and he was free. This was an answer to prayer that surprised the church.

16. God still answers the earnest prayers of the church.
17. Prayer is to be our priority, for prayer matters.

ILLUSTRATION: (*Background) Theologian, Karl Barth, considered to be among the most important Christian thinkers of the 20th century; said, "To clasp hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world." [Prayer. Christianity Today, Vol. 34, no. 4]

18. Prayer is a weapon infinitely more powerful than all the guns and the bayonets and the tanks and the planes and the battleships and the bombs of all the nations in all the world.

19. There is not only something we can do.

20. There is something God wants us to do and that something is prayer, for prayer matters.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you maybe healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

ILLUSTRATION: (*Background) Theologian Samuel Chadwick said, "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray."

21. Offering prayers of all kinds for all people is a matter of first urgency.

22. There are at least seven different Greek nouns for prayer, and four of them are used here.

23. Though not sharply distinguished like sample paint-chips, they do have different shades of focus.

24. The first word translated in the NIV as ‘request’ refers to ‘asking in the most elementary way with a clear sense of need’.

25. The next word translated, ‘prayers’ is the more familiar and general term for prayer.

26. It relates to our asking God exclusively and reverently, as it is never used but in approaching God.

27. The third word translated from the Greek as ‘intercession’ meant ‘to enter into a king’s or superior’s presence, to converse person to person and to submit a petition to him’.

28. The context here conveys the idea of putting a word into the ear of a superior on behalf of some other person.

29. The last word is translated as ‘thanksgiving’, which is an essential, not just an additional ingredient in prayer.

ILLUSTRATION: (*John draw cartoon with phrase on second copy) When a little boy was asked it he prayed every night, he answered, “No, sir, not every night. Some nights I don’t want anything!”

30. Prayer is an opportunity to give God thanks.

31. As a priority, we have a responsibility in its various aspects to take prayer seriously.

32. We are to pray for others, for others need our prayers.

33. The emphasis is on prayers for everyone, for everyone needs prayer.

34. There is not a person in this church that does not need prayer.

35. There is not a person in this community that does not need prayer.

36. There is not a person in this nation that does not need prayer.

37. There is not a person in this world that does not need prayer.

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” (Ephesians 6:18)

38. Praying for others is a very serious, very personal matter.

ILLUSTRATION: A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he causes me. His face, that hitherto may have been strange and intolerable to me, is transformed in intercession into the countenance of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner. This is a happy discovery for the Christian who begins to pray for others. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together

39. Everyone is a person for whom Christ died.

EXAMPLE: The people asked Samuel, the man of God, to pray for them. “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.” (I Samuel 12:23)

40. Perhaps as parents, we need to take praying for our children more seriously than we do.

41. Perhaps we need to take praying for our husband or wife more seriously than we do.

42. Perhaps we need to take praying for our neighbors more seriously than we do.

43. Every person that walks around the streets is a person for whom Christ died.

44. Every student you see at high school is a student for which Christ died.

45. Who have you prayed for this week?

46. The 52 Week Prayer Challenge is to keep us focused on praying for others.

47. Increasing the scope of our prayers can increase the impact on prayer.
48. God calls us to be generous with our prayers of others.
49. Your prayers can make a difference in someone's life today.
50. Having focused on praying for everyone, with the phrase, "**For kings and all those in authority,**" Paul now sets some specific targets or focus points for prayer.
51. In the time that Paul was writing, most rulers were enemies of the Christian faith, and within a decade, the apostle himself would forfeit his life at their hands for the sake of the gospel.
52. This exhortation to prayer becomes an example and call for us to follow.
53. Those in authority are to be the object of our prayers.
54. Prayer for kings and people of authority is to take place, for in this way, we can influence the course of national affairs, a fact often forgotten except in time of special crisis.
55. Our leaders need your prayers and mine.
56. People in authority need our prayers.
57. Christians, perhaps, are too quick to criticize and too slow to pray.
58. Do we spend as much time praying as we do complaining?
59. The church must make prayer the priority.

ILLUSTRATION: Our nation was war-torn and weary in the midst of the Civil War, and victory in the long struggle was anything but certain when the President received a resolution asking him to declare a national day of prayer. Here is part of his response: "We have forgotten the gracious hand, which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us," he wrote, "And have vainly imagined that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us." With those words, President Abraham Lincoln called on all Americans to turn to God in prayer for a quick outcome to the Civil War.

60. Prayer enables us to impact our community, nation and world

ILLUSTRATION: Author, Gerald Flurry has written: "Prayer shapes more of our nation's life than is formed by legislation.... Prayer is a sustained and intricate act of patriotism in the largest sense of that word-.... The single most important action contributing to whatever health and strength there is in our land is prayer."

61. This is a very serious time for America, and a very serious time for the church.

ILLUSTRATION: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 "

62. I began this section with the question, "How important is prayer?"

63. On this July 4th, I ask the question, "How important is prayer for America?"

64. Prayer is something we are called to do.

ILLUSTRATION: "Any revitalization of faith in this country will have to start with prayer, in which we gain a sense of the living presence of God." (George Gallup Jr.)

65. Prayer has been vital to our country from its foundation, and is vital now.

ILLUSTRATION: During those terrible days, when the Revolutionary Army camped at Valley Forge, a farmer was walking towards the camp. As he stepped forward, he heard a voice in the distance. It was an earnest voice. It sounded like someone praying. He stepped closer to see through the trees and spotted a sight he would never forget. He saw George Washington on his knees, his cheeks wet with tears, praying to God. It was reverent moment. When the farmer got home, he had to tell his wife the news. "George Washington will succeed! The Americans will secure their independence!" "What makes you think so, Isaac!" asked his wife. The farmer replied: "I heard him pray, Hannah, out in the woods today, and the Lord will surely hear his prayer. He will, Hannah; thee may rest assured He will." God did hear George Washington's prayer and the fight for freedom did succeed. If George Washington could humble himself to pray, shouldn't we go on our knees for our nation?

66. Will you renew your commitment to make prayer a priority?

67. Will you renew your commitment to make prayer for America a priority,

68. Lets stop and pray for our leaders.

II. (v.2) GOD WANTS YOU TO LIVE A GODLY AND HOLY LIFE

1. Paul writes with the assurance that prayer will impact our daily lives.
2. Paul is praying for results.

Illustration: (*Picture of this) At major sports games, the national anthem is sang. However, once the game starts, singing that national anthem has very little to do with the action on the field. In some churches and in some lives, prayer becomes more like a national anthem at a ball game. It gets the game started. It is a tradition the church or the Christian does, but it doesn't impact the action of that church. Prayer is not just a preliminary song. Prayer is what brings the wins in the game. It is the heartbeat and lifeblood of the church.

3. Prayer empowers people to live the life God has called us to live.
4. Prayer is the source of our spiritual breath.
5. A stagnant church can be a sign of lack of prayer in a church.
6. A spiritually weak church can be a sign of lack of prayer in the church.
7. Prayer is a personal responsibility and privilege that reaps great dividends in your own life as well as the life of others.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." (Colossians 4:2)

8. There are benefits of prayer and reasons that motivate and move us to pray.
9. We are to pray that we may live peaceful and quiet lives.

ILLUSTRATION: Sharon Fleming wrote this story: "When I was a teenager, our family took cross-country car trips each summer. To keep the peace, we each took a turn choosing a cassette to play in the car tape deck. No one was allowed to complain or comment about another's choice. My mother liked to listen to hymns. I chose contemporary Christian music. My younger brother preferred rock. And Dad? He always thought the best thing was a 90-minute tape that was still blank! Quietness."

10. What is sought through prayer is the best of conditions for expanding God's kingdom, not simply just a peaceful life
11. The word, 'peaceful' refers to 'a calm attitude within us regardless of what may be taking place around us'.
12. The term, 'peace' refers to 'an inner tranquility, freedom from worry and concern'.
13. The word, 'quiet' refers to circumstances around us.
14. The term, 'quiet' describes 'an outer peace, a calm that others can see'.
15. He is basically saying, "pray so you can live lives in all godliness and holiness."
16. We are to be walking billboards for the greatness and goodness of our God.
17. Prayer results in lives of godliness and holiness, taking on the characteristics of God.

"But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." (I Timothy 6:11)

18. The word, 'godliness' expresses reverence both toward God and man.
19. It describes that attitude of mind which respects man and honors God.
20. Godliness does not forget the reverence due to God, the rights due to men, or the respect due to self.
21. To 'be godly' means 'to be aware of one's dependence on God, to give Him worthy praise, and to conduct oneself in a manner which is pleasing to Him; the discharge of duty toward God in every way.'
22. Godliness is a crucial word in these pastoral letters and an important ethical term.

"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." (I Timothy 4:8)

23. Godliness is Paul's term in the Pastoral epistles for genuine Christianity, as it brings together knowledge and faith in God and the observable response of lifestyle.
24. It is the true reverence towards God which comes from knowledge.
25. Paul stresses that correct knowledge of God produces an observable Christian manner and conduct.
26. The second word is holiness, which designates the reverence due to holy things.
27. The word translated holiness denotes the Christian's dignity of demeanor, grace, dignity, or seriousness of purpose.

28. It is a life that reveals they have been in the presence of God.

ILLUSTRATION: **Background “Holiness means opening ourselves for God to pour through us.” (Frank Moore)

29. It speaks of proper conduct and has to do with behavior that can be seen.

ILLUSTRATION: (*Background) The first president of Princeton University and Preacher of years ago, Jonathan Edwards said, “Holiness is conformity of the heart and life unto God.”

30. The manner of life here described has the evaluating eye of the observer in mind and is meant to recommend the gospel to those who look on.

“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.” (I Timothy 2:8)

31. Our lives are to reflect the characteristics of a holy God.

32. I believe with all my heart the church must renew its heart to represent a holy God in America.

33. Both the terms, ‘godliness’ and ‘holiness’ refer to that behavior which is well-pleasing to God and men.

34. Through His power within, we are to live godly and holy lives, trusting God.

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

(I Thessalonians 5:23)

35. God is the faithful One we can depend upon.

36. The intent of this prayer is so we will live so no one will speak evil of the name of God and our teaching.

37. We pray to live godly and holy lives, for God wants us to live godly and holy lives.

ILLUSTRATION: **Background - As John Quincy Adams, our sixth president, said ...“Duty is ours, results are Gods.”

38. God wants you to live a godly and holy life.

III. (v.3-4) GOD WANTS YOU TO PLEASE HIM AND PROCLAIM HIS TRUTH

1. Prayer and living a life of godliness and holiness is good and pleasing to God.

2. Prayer for everyone is good because God wants all men to be saved.

3. A life that witnesses through godliness and holiness is good because God wants all people to be saved.

4. It is good in what it accomplishes and good in God’s eyes.

5. The ultimate purpose of prayer is to please, honor and glorify the Lord.

ILLUSTRATION: A relatively young pastor of a church in our community came and met with me and another pastor from the community in my office for prayer. He asked me what one book has probably impacted my life the most. I told him, “A little book called, The Kneeling Christian. I read this book, The Kneeling Christian, over 30 years ago and still remember it, as it greatly impacted my life. A favorite quote of mine from the book is this, “The chief object of prayer is to glorify the Lord Jesus. We are to ask in Christ’s name ‘That the Father may be glorified in the Son’. Listen! We are not to seek wealth or health, prosperity or success, ease or comfort, spirituality or fruitfulness in service simply for our own enjoyment or advancement or popularity, but only for Christ’s sake-for His glory.”

6. If we are praying to please God, we are praying that people will come to know Christ in a personal way.

7. It is not about what I want for the church, rather, it is about what He wants for the church.

ILLUSTRATION: The late president, Richard Nixon had a godly Quaker grandmother. Her advice to him when, as a nine year old, he asked why the Quaker meetings were so silent... "What thee must understand, Richard, is that the purpose of prayer is to listen to God, not to talk to God. The purpose of prayer is not to tell God what thee wants, but to find out from God what He wants from thee."

8. People would be troubled a lot less about the church if they prayed more about what God wants for the church.
9. The church is about transformation of lives.
10. God is glorified when people are coming to Christ
11. We pray to please the God who is our Savior.
12. Saving is what God does because of who He is.
13. God is the saving God, so He wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.
14. Out of our relationship with Him, we pray for people to be saved, for that is His heart.
15. On this day, we are aware that the freedom we have is because of people who gave their lives.
16. As we look at scripture, we have salvation and can live a saved life because Jesus gave His life for our salvation.

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

17. God wants people to be saved and we must never forget God’s purpose or mission.
18. We are surrounded by people that need Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION.*Background - Andrew Murray said, "The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history."

19. Paul’s primary concern here is the church’s prayer for the salvation of all people.
20. God wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.
21. The gospel is for everyone.
22. The issue is access for the gospel to be preached to all nations.

“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.” (Psalm 96:3)

23. God wants all people to be saved.
24. Theologian Donald Guthrie said, “Intercession for all men could be justified only on the ground of God’s willingness to save all.”

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (II Peter 3:9)

25. Think big when you pray.
26. God is big enough to save the world.
27. Don’t pray small prayers when we have such a big God.
28. Think big when you pray for America because God is big enough to do the miraculous in America.
29. Prayer is to be evangelistic.
30. Through prayer, we have a role to play in the evangelistic worldwide mission

ILLUSTRATION: The first settlers of America came here to express their religious faith ... for freedom of worship. The Pilgrims, who came to Plymouth Rock on the Mayflower, wrote the Mayflower Compact in 1620. Listen to what they said: “In the name of God. Amen. Having undertaken for the glory of God and for the advancement of the Christian faith, do solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, covenant and combine ourselves together.”

23 years later, the New England Confederation was written. Listen to what our founding fathers wrote: “Whereas we all came into these parts with one and the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity and peace.”

31. America was founded to advance the kingdom.
32. Christians must never forget their mission.

ILLUSTRATION: (Background) Patrick Henry – “It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ.”**

33. God wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.

ILLUSTRATION: Officer Tori Matthews of the Southern California Humane Society got an emergency call: a boy’s pet iguana had been scared up a tree by a neighbor’s dog.

It then fell from the tree into a swimming pool, where it sank like a brick. Officer Matthews came with her net. She dived into the pool, emerging seconds later with the pet's limp body. As the Arizona Republic (2/14/95) reported, she thought, "Well, you do CPR on a person and a dog, why not an iguana? So she put her lips to the iguana's. "Now that I look back on it," she said, "it was a pretty ugly animal to be kissing, but the last thing I wanted to do was tell this little boy that his iguana had died." The lizard responded to her efforts and is expected to make a full recovery.

Tori Matthews didn't see a water-logged reptile; she saw a little boy's beloved pet. We may never see the beauty in some people, but when we realize how much they mean to God, we'll do what we can to keep them from drowning.

34. We must do our part to tell the world of Jesus, for salvation is God's heart for everyone.

35. Knowledge is a favorite word with St Paul.

36. It has become a technical term for the intellectual acceptance of Christianity.

37. Knowledge of the truth is to hear and grasp the gospel message.

38. Scripture is the source of truth

ILLUSTRATION: (Background) Abraham Lincoln "It is the duty of nations (as well as of men) to own their own independence upon the overruling power of God ... and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures (and proved by all history) that those nations only are blest whose God is the Lord."**

39. Come to a knowledge of the truth it is a formula that described conversion as a rational decision about the gospel.

40. It is not just more knowledge that America needs.

ILLUSTRATION: George Carlin wrote in Paradox of Our Time, "We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness."

41. It is knowledge of the truth that is needed.

42. Speaking of godlessness in the last days, Paul wrote, "**Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.**" (II Timothy 3:7)

43. It is time to acknowledge that truth in Christ.

44. Truth is correct doctrine - it is that which is true.

45. Paul was committed to the knowledge of the truth.

46. America is in need of the truth.

"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 – " (I Timothy 2:5-6)

47. There is one God and one mediator between God and man.

48. There is one who gave Himself as a ransom for all men and that is Jesus, who is the Truth.

49. Truth is the whole revelation of God in Christ.

50. Truth is known, only in Christ is Truth.

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one come to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)

51. Truth is found in Jesus.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

52. It is His truth that is needed.

53. The choir sang how it is His truth that is marching on.

54. Truth has no expiration date.

55. His truth is eternal.

56. Time, cultures, or contexts cannot alter the truth of Christ.

57. People can wrestle with the truth of Christ, interpret the truth of Christ, reject the truth of Christ, receive the truth of Christ, but they cannot alter the truth of Christ.

58. It is His truth that frees us.

"Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" (John 8:31-32)

60. His truth impacts the way we live.

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-“ (Titus 1:1)

61. In knowing the things of God, obedience must always precede further knowledge.
62. We must live out the knowledge of the truth.
63. We must speak forth the truth of Christ, for it is the truth that brings freedom.
64. The world is in need of truth.
65. America is in need of His truth, for it is life.
66. His truth is marching on.
67. The truth of His salvation.
68. The truth of His forgiveness is marching on.
69. The truth of His love is marching on.
70. The truth of His compassion is marching on.
71. The truth of His victory is marching on.
72. The truth of His holiness is marching on.
73. May God open our eyes to see His truth.
74. *Glory, Glory Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.*
75. God wants you to please Him and proclaim His truth.

CONCLUSION: “WHAT IS GOD ASKING OF YOU?”

I. (v.1-2) GOD WANTS YOU TO MAKE PRAYER YOUR PRIORITY – Will you?

II. (v.2) GOD WANTS YOU TO LIVE A GODLY AND HOLY LIFE - Will You?

III. (v.3-4) GOD WANTS YOU TO PLEASE HIM AND PROCLAIM HIS TRUTH Will You?

L:\Pastor David\Sermons\NT-I-II Timothy\NT-I Timothy\I Timothy 2-1-4- How than should we live number 2.doc