

A man had a habit of grumbling at the food his wife placed before him at family meals. Then he would ask the blessing. One day after his usual combination complaint-prayer, his little girl asked, “Daddy, does God hear us when we pray?” “Why, of course,” he replied. “He hears us every time we pray.”

She paused on this a moment, and asked, “Does He hear everything we say the rest of the time?”

“Yes, dear, every word,” he replied, encouraged that he had inspired his daughter to be curious about spiritual matters. However, his pride was quickly turned to humility at his daughter’s next question. “Then, which does God believe?” James 3:10 teaches us, “From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.

Let me ask a question, Do you know what the first cordless phone was?

Today we read 1 Timothy 2:1-7. This passage is a good example to show a great power in prayer. The Apostle Paul teaches Timothy to lead his community in praying for all. The uniqueness of this scripture is the repetition of the term, “Everyone and All”. Pray for all, even all in authority. Paul also encourages us to pray for all.

Why do we need to pray for everyone? We don’t even have much time to sit down and pray for our family and our church members. How can we pray for all?

Paul explains that God wants to save everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth. We as God’s disciple pray because our prayer is deeply related to salvation of all God’s people. Our prayer is the way participating in God’s Salvation within our whole life.

Let me share little bit about the Christian community of Timothy's time. They faced very difficult situations under the persecution because they proclaimed the new revelation of God in Christ Jesus. They were totally isolated by the society. They were not an accepted part of social members in Ephesus or Jewish communities. They were excluded by the community.

How much easier it would have been, under the threat of persecution, to withdraw from society to live a "quiet and peaceable" life!

However, they desired the opposite. They wanted to live fully within their world. They wanted to fulfill the proclamation of God's radical desire of salvation for all people. So, Paul empowers the Christian community under the persecution to be strengthened in their faith by learning to pray even for those who persecuted them.

It calls our congregation to consider the faithful implications of sharing God's love for saving all including people who hurt us. It challenges us deeply! We like to have this God, the reassuring, safe, shoulder-to-cry-on God. However, this God can be a God of controversy and confrontation to us. This God stretches us beyond our comfort zones and calls us to love in surprising situations.

The prayer of salvation for all is within our church. Also, we are called by the God to love and to pray for those outside churches as well, those who are radically different from ourselves and those who may frighten us. While writing this sermon, I took the moment to reflect on concern for those who have suffering harm from their authorities. Some will not feel free to forgive, much less to pray for those who have harmed them. It is very challenging instruction with prayers.

Let us go back to the situations of 1 Timothy. They lived experiences of discrimination because they have faith of God. They faced the danger of

persecution because they proclaimed Jesus as their savior. They even experienced oppression because they were different from people in Ephesus and Jews. For them, it was also very challenging instruction with prayers. However, their prayers for all within that difficult situation teach them about God's grace and mercy, salvation and justice. Those of us who live in the more central spaces of Christianity and culture need to hear.

For this coming week, I hope you take a moment of prayer for all. It will be your action of salvation for all people. If you have someone who makes you feel uncomfortable to think even, I encourage you to take a moment to pray for them without any words, but with silence. I also ask your prayers for our nation and political leaders. I also ask your prayers for people who are discriminated, hurt, oppressed, and persecuted, for people who have encountered those pains every day, every moment, and every relationship. Your prayer is the participation of God's Salvation. So, now I ask your prayer for our church AND your pastor.

Here, I want to little tips for our prayer life. I learned in the children's moment Five Fingers with Prayer. Your thumb is nearest to you. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct, and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our secular leaders. Pray for our president and congress, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger. It should remind us to pray for those who weak, in trouble, or in pain. Last comes the little finger. The smallest finger of all. This is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. On Monday pray for the thumb which is nearest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved ones is a "sweet duty." On Tuesday, pray for

people in the pointing finger such as teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. On Wednesday, pray for our secular leaders such as our president and congress, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. On Thursday pray for people who are weak, in trouble, or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. On Friday, pray for yourself. Someone says, "Our prayer will be most like the prayer of Christ if we do not ask God to show us what is going to be, or to make any particular thing happen, but only pray that we may be faithful in whatever happens." You can ask me, what do we pray for on Saturday?

The next tip for our prayer life is that whatever you do, pray first. The Message bible translates verse 1 in this way: "The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know". Paul affirms the importance of prayer and the need for prayer on behalf of all people. Prayer should be the first thing, not the last thing.

Have you heard this saying? "I can't do anything else about this, so I will pray". Yes. We have to pray. But do you know what that saying tell us? We pray as a last resort. When we pray that way, we are saying we are still in control of our lives. God seems to be an afterthought and we want God to do something special in our troubles. That saying means that prayer doesn't come as the first thing but it comes last.

Our loving God helps us when we cannot help ourselves. God help those who look to God in obedience and prayer. Prayer for us and all people is the first thing we have to do. Do you begin your day with God? When you get up in the morning, do

you pray? When you begin a new project, do you pray? Pray first before you do anything!

In end of my sermon, I want to share the beautiful verse 5. “There is only one God. And there is only one way that people can reach God. That way is through Jesus Christ, who is also a man. Jesus gave himself to pay for the sins of all people. Jesus is proof that God wants all people to be saved. And that proof came at the right time. That is why I was chosen to tell the Good News.” You are chosen to tell this Good News at this right time. God invites us to pray first for all people to hear the Good News.