

## Intercession (1)

### Lesson 3

#### VERSES TO READ:

##### **1 Tim. 2:1**

I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men.

##### **1 Tim. 2:3-4**

This is good and acceptable in the sight of our Savior God, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.

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If we touch Paul's spirit in 1 Timothy 2:1-7, we shall sense his burden that those who take the lead in the church life must have a prayer life. In these verses Paul seems to be telling Timothy, "I have shown you a clear picture of God's economy and how it is versus different teachings. I have also pointed out to you that, in His mercy, the Lord has made me a pattern of His economy. I have also charged you solemnly to war the good warfare on behalf of God's economy. Now deep in my spirit is the burden to exhort you to pray. I exhort that petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men. Do not think that teaching comes before prayer. No, prayer must be first, and teaching, second." (Life-study of 1 Timothy, p. 27)

## Proper Prayer Life for a Proper Church Life

In the first chapter of 1 Timothy Paul lays a good foundation to speak of the church life in a positive way. In 2:1 he goes on to say, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men." If we would have a proper church life, we must first have a prayer life. A proper church is a praying church. A church that is without prayer is pitiful. Prayerlessness is a sin. All in the Lord's recovery must be prayerful and stand against the sin of prayerlessness. The elders in the churches must take up Paul's charge to "first of all" pray.

If we would be a Timothy, we must take the lead not to argue, gossip, or criticize, but to pray. Whenever we hear some news, good or bad, concerning a particular church, we should pray. Do not discuss the situation, do not gossip about it, and do not criticize. Just pray! Likewise, if you hear something about a saint or about an elder, pray for that one. The first requirement to have a proper church life is to pray. Oh, we all need to practice this! If we exercise ourselves to have a prayer life, the church will be living and uplifted. If some would be today's Timothys to take the lead to pray, the others will follow.

Instead of talking so much and even instead of working so much, we should pray more. Should you hear that a saint is weak or backsliding, do not talk about that

person, and do not criticize him. Moreover, do not immediately go to visit him. Instead, pray for him. Whether or not you should visit him depends on the Lord's leading. After you pray about the matter, if the Lord leads you to visit that one, simply follow the Lord and visit him. But do not do anything presumptuously. If the Lord does not lead you to visit a backsliding saint, you should not visit him on your own. It is possible that even in visiting the saints we may be presumptuous. Yes, visiting a backsliding saint is a presumptuous sin if it is done in ourselves apart from prayer and the Lord's leading. But if through our prayer the Lord definitely leads us to visit a certain one, that visitation will be effective.

We should also pray whenever we hear of problems among the saints. We should not presume that we are experienced and qualified to solve problems. Such an attitude is not only presumptuous; it is also blasphemous, for it is to consider ourselves as God. If we learn about a problem between brothers, we should bring this matter to the Lord in our prayer.

In 2:1 Paul mentions petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings. Prayer is general, with the essence of worship and fellowship. Petitions are special and are for particular needs. The Greek word rendered intercessions means approach to God in a personal and confiding manner, that is, intervening, interfering, before God in others' affairs for their benefit. In addition, we must offer thanksgiving. Often when we hear good news about certain churches,

elders, or saints, we praise them instead of giving thanks to God for them. If the situation in a certain church is good, it is because of God, not because of the church. Likewise, if a particular elder or saint is doing well, it also is because of God's grace. Therefore, instead of praising a church or a person, we should give thanks to God.

In mentioning petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, Paul's spirit was very burdened concerning the importance of prayer. He wanted his dear spiritual children to pray. Again and again I would emphasize the fact that we can have a proper church life only if we have a prayer life. I can testify that I have never prayed more than I have during the past several years. I can also testify that I have seen definite answers to my prayers.

Recently, my activity was limited for a time so that I could rest and care for my health. When I heard about certain needs, I prayed for them. Perhaps the Lord limited me that He might impress me with the fact that prayer is more important than work. May we all learn the lesson that the way to have a good church life is to pray. This is crucial. If our talking is turned into praying, the church in our locality will be transformed. (Life-study of 1 Timothy, pp. 25-28)

**Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Timothy, msg. 3**