

1 Timothy 2:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; Paul transitions to corporate worship instructions with "I exhort" (parakaleō, παρακαλέω)—strongly urge or appeal. The word "therefore" connects these instructions to preceding themes: sound doctrine should produce godly practice, including proper prayer. "First of all" (prōton pantōn, πρῶτον πάντων) indicates priority, not necessarily chronological order—prayer holds primary importance in church gatherings.

Paul lists four types of prayer:

1. "Supplications" (deēseis, δεήσεις)—requests for specific needs
2. "Prayers" (proseuchas, προσευχάς)—general worship and devotion to God
3. "Intercessions" (enteuxeis, ἐντεύξεις)—petitions on behalf of others, especially approaching a superior for favor
4. "Giving of thanks" (eucharistias, εὐχαριστίας)—gratitude for blessings received.

Together these cover the full range of prayer—petition, worship, intercession, and thanksgiving.

Remarkably, these prayers are to be "for all men" (hyper pantōn anthrōpōn, ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων)—not merely fellow believers but all humanity. This universal scope reflects God's universal love (John 3:16) and His desire that all be saved (2:4). Christians pray for enemies, persecutors, unbelievers, and those in authority,

demonstrating kingdom values that transcend natural human divisions and animosities.

Historical Context

Jewish prayer tradition included specific prayers for rulers and civil authorities, recognizing that stable government enabled peaceful practice of religion. Jesus commanded His followers to pray for enemies and persecutors (Matthew 5:44), radically expanding prayer's scope beyond those naturally loved. The early church continued this practice, praying even for Roman emperors who increasingly persecuted Christians.

The variety of prayer types Paul lists likely reflects established worship patterns in early churches. These weren't merely spontaneous, individual prayers but structured corporate worship including petition, praise, intercession, and thanksgiving. The emphasis on prayer "first of all" indicates its priority in church gatherings—not merely preliminary routine but central activity.

In Ephesus, a cosmopolitan city with diverse populations and religions, the call to pray for "all men" would have clear application. Christians were to pray not only for fellow believers but for pagan neighbors, governing authorities, business associates, and even those hostile to the faith. This demonstrated Christianity's universal scope and loving character, contradicting accusations that it was a narrow, exclusive sect.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What proportion of your church's corporate gatherings is devoted to prayer, and does this reflect prayer's "first of all" priority?
2. How regularly do you pray for those outside your natural affinity groups—political opponents, religious skeptics, cultural enemies?
3. How balanced is your prayer life across supplication, worship, intercession, and thanksgiving rather than focusing primarily on requests?

Interlinear Text

Παρακαλῶ	οὖν	πρῶτον	πάντων	ποιεῖσθαι	δεήσεις
I exhort	therefore	that first	all	be made	supplications
G3870	G3767	G4412	G3956	G4160	G1162
προσευχάς	ἐντεύξεις	εὐχαριστίας	ὑπὲρ	πάντων	
prayers	intercessions	and giving of thanks	for	all	
G4335	G1783	G2169	G5228	G3956	
ἀνθρώπων					
men					
G444					

Additional Cross-References

2 Thessalonians 1:3 (Parallel theme): We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

James 5:16 (Prayer): Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Ephesians 5:20 (Parallel theme): Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

1 Timothy 2:4 (Parallel theme): Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

2 Timothy 2:24 (Parallel theme): And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

Philippians 1:3 (Parallel theme): I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

1 Timothy 5:5 (Prayer): Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

Titus 2:11 (Parallel theme): For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Titus 3:2 (Parallel theme): To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

Hebrews 6:11 (Parallel theme): And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

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