

Christians' Prayer, Missio Dei, and Missio Ecclesiae: An Exegetical Study of 1 Timothy 2:1-7

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Received: 18/12/2020

Accepted: 14/01/2020

Published: 31/01/2020

Abstract

1 Timothy 2:1-15 is considered to be one of the most profound passages on prayer in the New Testament because it presents an extensive instruction on what and how Christians ought to pray. However, NT scholars are in dispute on the purpose of the instruction on prayer in this passage. It is common that this instruction, especially that of 2:1-7, is regarded as a general command for Christians to pray for all people and for government leaders. This article will demonstrate that in this passage, Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus to pray for all people, including kings, so that God's mission to bring salvation to all mankind will be fulfilled. At the same time, Christians need to pray so that they may carry out their mission among the ungodly society by living godly and dignified lives in accordance with the apostolic teaching and resist the false teaching that permeates the church. The structure of the text will be examined grammatically to expound the meaning of this passage.

Keywords: God's mission, pray, godliness, dignity.

Introduction

1 Timothy 2:1-15 is considered to be one of the most profound passages on prayer in the New Testament because it is an extensive instruction on what and how Christians should pray.¹ However, NT scholars are in dispute on the purpose of the instruction on prayer in this passage. It is common that this instruction, especially that of 2:1-7, is regarded as a general command for Christians to pray for all people and government leaders.² Some have argued that the author of the Pastoral Epistles exhorts his readers to pray in order to have a Christian bourgeois ideal that confirms the Greco-Roman values of good citizenship. With regard to this matter, Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann assert, "In this passage the ideal of Christian citizenship is depicted in characteristic and, as has been shown above, common words. It is an ideal to which the Pastorals refer again and again. This ideal of a peaceful life differs greatly from Paul's understanding of existence, which reflects the many conflicts of his life."³ Other

¹ John L. Houlden, *The Pastoral Epistles: I and II Timothy, Titus*, TPI New Testament Commentaries (London, England: SCM, 1989), 65.

² This conception is addressed in Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 162.

³ Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 2004). Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles: First*

commentators contend that the command of prayer is just a digression from the flow of thought of the letter.⁴ Nevertheless, I argue that in this passage Paul exhorts the congregation in Ephesus to pray for all people, including kings, so that God's mission to bring salvation to all humankind may take place.⁵ At the same time, Christians are needed to pray so that they may carry out their missional task among an ungodly society by means of living in godliness and dignity in accordance with the apostolic teaching instead of the false teaching that permeates the church. This paraenesis is subversive to the Roman emperor, who was regarded as a god, savior, and mediator between humankind and the gods.⁶

Form and Structure

Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

¹Παρακαλῶ οὖν πρῶτον πάντων ποιῆσθαι δεήσεις προσευχὰς ἐντεύξεις εὐχαριστίας ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων, ²ὑπὲρ βασιλέων καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντων, ἵνα ἡρεμον καὶ ἡσύχιον βίον διάγωμεν ἐν πάσῃ εὐσεβείᾳ καὶ σεμνότητι. ³τοῦτο καλὸν καὶ ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ, ⁴ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν. ⁵Εἷς γὰρ θεός, εἷς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἀνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ⁶ὃ δούς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων, τὸ μαρτύριον καιροῖς ἰδίοις. ⁷εἰς ὃ ἐτέθη ἐγὼ κῆρυξ καὶ ἀπόστολος, ἀλήθειαν λέγω οὐ ψεύδομαι, διδάσκαλος ἐθνῶν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.

Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2009); Margaret M. Mitchell, "Corrective Composition, Corrective Exegesis: The Teaching on Prayer in 1 Tim. 2,1-15," in *1 Timothy Reconsidered*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2008), 41–62.

⁴ Such as Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 62. However, I. Howard Marshall points out that the mention of women at prayer in verses 9-10 leads to a digression on the further instruction on women. See I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 1999), 416.

⁵ The present author holds the authorship of Paul of the Pastoral Epistles since the notion of the Pastorals is pseudepigraphal is not convincing. See Terry L. Wilder, "Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and the Pastoral Epistles," in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 28–51. Luke T. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 55-98

⁶ Although Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, his coworker, I do believe that the messages of this letter, also the rest of the Pastorals, were intended to be read to the church members. Johnson rightly notes on this matter, "in a letter like this the point is not information given to the delegate, but rhetoric to shape the perceptions of those readers meant to 'overhear' the conversation between apostle and delegate." See Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 197.

Outlines

A. The Command: Prayer for All Mankind (vv. 1-2a)

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions,
prayers,
intercessions,
thanksgivings be made on behalf of all human beings
on behalf of all kings
and all who are in ruling
power,

B. The Purpose: The Ideal Condition for the Mission of God and the Church (v. 2b)

in order that we may live in a peaceful
and quiet life
in every piety
and dignity.

B'. The Motive: God's Desire to Save All Mankind (vv. 3-4)

This is good
and is pleasing before God our Savior,
who desires all human beings to be saved
and come to a knowledge of the
truth.

C. The Ground: One God and One Mediator (vv. 5-6)

For God is one,
and one is the mediator between God and human beings,
a man Christ Jesus,
who gave himself a ransom on behalf of all,
a witness at the proper time [a transition]

D. The Model: Mission of Paul (v. 7)

For which I myself was appointed a herald
and an apostle,
I am telling you the truth, I am not lying,
a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Immediate Context

Regarding the function of the conjunction οὖν in this pericope, one can see it both as an inferential and transitional conjunction.⁷ As an inferential conjunction, οὖν refers to the preceding section where Paul urged (παρεκάλεισά) Timothy so that he might stay in Ephesus

⁷ See "οὖν," *BDAG* 736-37.

“to instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine” (RSV). Furthermore, both 1:3-20 and 2:1-7 share common themes: salvation (1:15 cf. 2:3), Paul’s appointment (1:12, 27; cf. 2:7), διδασκα- word group (ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω, 1:3; νομοδιδάσκαλος, 1:7; διδασκαλία, 1:10, cf. διδάσκαλος, 2:7), ungodliness (ἀσεβής, 1:9) and godliness (εὐσέβεια, 2:2), king (βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων, 1:17 cf. βασιλέων, 2:2), only/one God (μόνῳ θεῷ, 1:17 cf. εἷς θεός, 2:5), and knowledge (νοέω, 1:7; οἶδα, 1:9 cf. ἐπίγνωσις, 2:4). Here, this post-positive οὖν may be translated as “therefore” (e.g., ASV, Geneva, KJV, NKJV). In addition, in this verse, οὖν can also serve as a transitional conjunction that marks a shifting theme in this letter from the topic of Paul’s calling to the instruction of prayer. As such, one should render οὖν as “then” or “now,” as translated in the majority of English translations. This transition signifies that 2:1-7 is still connected to the preceding passage, while Paul also moves on to another point of discussion.

As addressed above, some have maintained that this passage leads to a digression, the section of instruction to women to keep silent (2:11-15).⁸ I find that this notion is not convincing; rather, I would argue that 2:11-15 is closely linked to 2:1-10. Paul instructs women at the church in Ephesus to dress in respectable apparel, submit to men, and play their domestic roles so that they may live in godliness and dignity, as written in 2:2.⁹ If my observation is correct, the whole section of 2:1-15 should be read as one solid unit.

Central Themes

There is little consensus among commentators regarding the overarching theme of 1 Timothy 2:1-7. While some argue for prayer as the central theme,¹⁰ others hold that the topic of the gospel is prominent in this discussion.¹¹ Still, others point out that the central idea of this pericope is salvation, since the discussion of prayer occurs only in one verse, while the issue of salvation can be found in three verses (2:4, 5, 6).¹² To my understanding, two themes stand out in this section: prayer and salvation. The issue of prayer should not be undermined in this passage, given that Paul employs the phrase πρῶτον πάντων before he exhorts his readers to pray. Though one may understand the term πρῶτος as “being first in a sequence,”¹³ it is more plausible to read this adverb as “priority of importance,” since, according to Towner, “often the first item mentioned is of greatest importance or urgency.”¹⁴ Additionally, because the topic of prayer continues into vv. 8-11, it is valid to maintain that prayer is central in 2:1-7.

⁸ E.g. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 416.

⁹ I elaborate on this matter in the section *The Church Is Called to Live in Every Godliness and Dignity*.

¹⁰ E.g. Houlden, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 65.

¹¹ R. St. John Parry, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 11; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 416.

¹² See William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 76; cf. Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 79-84.

¹³ See πρῶτος BDAG 892.

¹⁴ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 165 n. 6.

Paul highlights this importance of prayer by employing four different expressions for prayer: δέησις (request),¹⁵ προσευχή (prayer),¹⁶ ἔντευξις (intercession),¹⁷ and εὐχαριστία (thanksgiving).¹⁸ The purpose of his employment of those terms, other than to emphasize the preeminence of prayer in Christian life, is that Paul wants to show the universal scope of prayer: on behalf all of humankind and for the salvation of all human beings.¹⁹ Among those four expressions, the relation of petition and thanksgiving is worth discussing. David W. Pao contends that both two attitudes of prayer are closely linked: “When petition is grounded on thanksgiving, God and not self-interest becomes the focus. On the other hand, thanksgiving without petition proclaims God to be the Creator without trusting that he indeed is one who is able to provide for his people.”²⁰ Furthermore, thanksgiving is well connected to salvation since, according to Peter O’Brien, the ground of thanksgiving is “the mighty work of God in bringing salvation through the gospel.”²¹ This connection between prayer and salvation may confirm that both the issues of prayer and salvation are the focus of this paragraph. Moreover, thanksgiving in prayer also contains an anti-idol expression since thanklessness is connected to idolatry (Rom. 1:21, “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened,” ESV).²² In a similar vein, Pao also argues that thanksgiving is basically an acknowledgment that God is the Lord of all.²³ This understanding is in line with my argument in this paper that 1 Timothy 2:1-7 is subversive since it protests the hegemony of the imperial cult in Asia Minor that worshipped the emperor.

God’s Desire to Save All Mankind

The theme of salvation is central in the Pastoral Epistles. This centrality of soteriology is indicated by the prominent occurrences of the σω- word group in this corpus.²⁴ Also in the Pastorals, no fewer than *ten* passages are closely related to the topic of salvation (1 Tim. 1:15-

¹⁵ The term δέησις and προσευχή are sometimes written together (e.g. 1 Tim. 5:5; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6).

¹⁶ προσευχή is a generic term of prayer and often used in Paul (e.g. Rom. 1:10; 1 Thess. 1:2; Eph. 1:16; Philem. 4).

¹⁷ ἔντευξις was originally used to request a formal petition to those who were in high rank before it was adopted as term of Christian prayer (e.g. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.12; 2 Macc. 4:8; Philo, *Legation to Gaius* 276.2).

¹⁸ Other occurrences of this expression in Pauline writings such as 1 Cor. 14:16; 2 Cor. 9:12; Phil. 4:6; Col. 2:7; 4:2; 1 Thess. 3:9.

¹⁹ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 419.

²⁰ David W. Pao, *Thanksgiving: An Investigation of a Pauline Theme* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 36.

²¹ Peter T. O’Brien, “Thanksgiving within the Structure of Pauline Theology,” in *Pauline Studies: Festschrift for F. F. Bruce*, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Exeter, England: Paternoster, 1980), 62.

²² Donald A. Carson, “Paul’s Mission and Prayer,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives in Paul’s Mission*, ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Apollos; InterVarsity, 2000), 179.

²³ Pao, *Thanksgiving*, 95.

²⁴ σωζέω occurs 7 times out of 106 times in the NT; σωτήρ: 10 times out of 24 times in the NT, while it only occurs 2 times in the undisputed letters; σωτηρία: 2 times out of 45 times in the NT; σωτήριος: once and the only occurrence in the NT; διασώζω: 1 time out of 8 times in the NT.

16; 2:3-6, 15; 4:10, 16; 2 Tim. 1:8-10; 2:8-13; 3:13-15; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7). Among those passages, two have emphasis on the universal scope of salvation: one is the passage discussed in this paper, and the other one is Titus 2:11-14.

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works (ESV).

However, the emphasis on the universality of salvation in the 1 Timothy passage is demonstrated by the prominent use of the term πᾶς, five times the passage as an exhortation: to pray on behalf of all mankind (πάντων ἀνθρώπων, v. 1), to pray for all who are in ruling power (πάντων τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντων, v. 2), and to live in every godliness and dignity (πάσῃ εὐσεβείᾳ καὶ σεμνότητι, v. 2). This strong urge is based on the facts that God desires all mankind (πάντας ἀνθρώπους, v. 4) to be saved and that Christ Jesus has given himself as a ransom on behalf of all (πάντων, v. 6). This notion of God's desire to save all mankind does not mean that all men and women will be saved (universalism).²⁵

One of the reasons Paul gives prominence to the universal scope of salvation is that he wants to counter the exclusive elitist teaching about salvation from the false teachers in Ephesus.²⁶ From the mirror reading, one may conclude that the false teachers have deceived Christians in Ephesus by strongly promoting the Law (1 Tim. 1:7), circumcision (Titus 1:10), and Jewish myths (1:14). They also emphasize the teaching of myths (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14), genealogies (1 Tim. 1:4; Titus 3:9), and asceticism (1 Tim. 4:3; 5:14; Titus 1:15). While there is no agreement among scholars regarding the identity of those heretical teachers, there are at least four proposals about the nature of the false teaching: (1) sectarian Jewish teaching; (2) proto-Gnostic teaching; (3) Hellenistic characteristics; and (4) the amalgamation of those elements.²⁷ Regardless of their differing opinions on the identification of the heresy, most scholars would agree that the general nature of the false teaching spread in the church was exclusivism and elitism. For instance, Mounce states as follows, "The opponents are teaching exclusivism, limiting salvation to only a select few."²⁸ Paul criticizes this restrictiveness by giving particular emphasis on the universal nature of salvation: for all people, not only a small number of believers who follow the heretical teachers. The correlation between the salvation issue and the heretical teaching in the church in Ephesus is also shown

²⁵ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 64; cf. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 426. as Fee writes: "[This statement] implies neither that all (meaning everybody) will be saved (against 3:6; 4:2; or e.g., 4:10) nor that God's will is somehow frustrated since all, indeed, are not saved. The concern is simply with the universality of the gospel."

²⁶ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 420.

²⁷ See an extensive discussion on the heresy in the Pastorals in Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, lxix-lxxv. A new proposal regarding the identity of the Ephesian heresy has been given by Dillon T. Thornton who argues that the false teachers came from the Christian community in Ephesus who has incorrect view on the eschatology that derived from the complexity of Paul's views. See Dillon T. Thornton, *Hostility in the House of God: An Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016).

²⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 75.

by the phrase εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν as a parallelism with πάντα ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι.²⁹ Many have seen this phrase as another way to define salvation.³⁰ According to Marshall, Paul's expression of salvation in terms of "the knowledge of truth" is polemical since Paul wants Christians to believe in the apostolic teachings instead of the heretical ones.³¹

In verse 2, Paul urges the Ephesian Christians to pray on behalf of kings and all who are in ruling power (ὑπὲρ βασιλέων καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντων).³² Despite the fact that in the Hellenistic world βασιλεύς may refer to any ruler, including Roman client kings (e.g., Herodian kings, Mark 6:14; Acts 12:1; 25:13), in this discussion the term most likely indicates the Roman emperor.³³ Some have read this passage as an exhortation for Christians to pray for the government as part of their civil responsibility. As Robert W. Wall said in a Presidential address at the annual meeting of the Wesley Theological Society, "If one accepts the role of the Pastorals within the Pauline corpus, recognized at the point of canonization, the performances of 1 Tim 2:2 and Titus 3:1 could be employed to amplify the theological motive of Rom 13 and its exhortation of the church's support of civil authority."³⁴ In line with this, Marshall points out the exhortation to pray for kings so that we live a peaceful and quiet life is a traditional principle that all Christians should keep:

Its place here, however, is not unexpected when considered alongside the traditional emphasis in the NT household codes on the church's responsibility towards the State. Elsewhere this responsibility is described with the customary verb (ὑποτάσσεσθαι; Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17; Tit. 3:1), and the duties and motives connected with 'submission' may vary (e.g., paying taxes in Rom. 13:7; 'honouring' in 1 Pet. 2:17 and 'obeying' in Tit 3:1 those in authority). Here prayer for those in authority may well be seen as the application of the traditional principle.³⁵

However, this present author believes that this exhortation is subversive as it protests the imperial worship that was prominent in Asia Minor in Paul's time. According to A. T. Hanson, "[W]e are driven to conclude that the author was trying to counter the imperial cult make it seem very probable that the author of the Pastorals was consciously attempting to present Christ as the true savior of the human race over against the false savior Caesar."³⁶

Numerous reasons support the notion that this command to pray is subversive. First, Paul urges that the Christians pray *to God* on behalf of the emperor instead of pray *to the*

²⁹ The phrase ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας occurs several times in the Pastorals (2 Tim. 2:4; 3:7; Titus 1:1).

³⁰ E.g. Anthony T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters: Commentary on the First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 67.

³¹ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 428.

³² ὑπεροχῇ and ὑπερέχω indicates those who are in high rank throughout the Roman Empire (cf. Rom. 13:1; 1 Cor. 2:1; 1 Pet. 2:13; 2 Macc. 5:13; 2 Macc. 3:11; Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.3. See Gerhard Dellling, "ὑπερέχω, ὑπεροχῇ" *TDNT* 8:523-24.

³³ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 167; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 421.

³⁴ Robert W. Wall, "Empire, Church, and Missio Dei: On Praying for Our Kings (1 Timothy 2:1-2)," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 47.1 (2012): 21.

³⁵ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 420.

³⁶ Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters*, 187-88.

emperor and on behalf of the emperor. The practice of praying on behalf the emperor was commonplace in the New Testament era. Warren Carter gives an explanation of the imperial cult:

The “imperial cult” refers to a vast array of temples, images, rituals, personnel, and theological claims that honored the emperor. Temples dedicated to specific emperors and images of emperors located in other temples were focal points for offering thanksgiving and prayers to the gods for the safekeeping and blessing of emperors and members of the imperial household. Incense, sacrifices, and annual vows expressed and renewed civic loyalty. The related street processions and feasting, often funded by elites, expressed honor, gratitude, and commemoration of significant events such as an emperor’s birthday, accession to power, or military victories.³⁷

In that time, people not only prayed on behalf of the emperor but also *to* the emperor. This ritual was extended by people to dead emperors; S. R. F. Price describes that Horace lifted a prayer for the deceased Augustus.³⁸ Moreover, according to Price, people in the ancient Greco-Roman world also offered prayers to the living emperors. He notes,

An emperor received a scattering of these votive offerings, of which the clearest example reads: To Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Sebastos and the people the votive (euchen) was set up by Salmon son of Theon, priest of Zeus and sacrificer for the Sebastoi, along with his wife, at a cost of denarii. Similarly an imperial procurator dedicated a votive to the emperor Commodus.³⁹

In other words, in the first century, the concept of prayer *on behalf of* the emperor and *to* the emperor was common. From the lens of modern worldview, the ritual of prayer *for* and at the same time *to* the same object may be seen as contradictory; however, that was not the case for the first century worldview. Steven J. Freisen notes this commonplace acceptance:

Thus, the double prayer — to the emperor and to the gods on behalf of the emperor does not reveal a deep-seated ambivalence at the heart of the imperial cults. Rather, the twofold prayer accurately reflected imperial theology: the gods looked after the emperors, who in turn looked after the concerns of the gods on earth to the benefit of humanity. Imperial authority ordered human society, and divine authority protected the emperors. This is why the prayer to the emperors was a

³⁷ Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), 7.

³⁸ S. R. F. Price, “God and Emperors: The Greek Language of The Roman Imperial Cult,” *Journal of Hellenistic Studies* 104 (1984): 92. Horace, looking forward to the return of Augustus from Spain, describes the peacefulness of Italy: the countryman returns joyfully (from his vineyard) to his cups and invites your presence (Augustus) as a god at the second course; he plies you with many a prayer, with pure wine poured from the cups, and mixes your divinity with the household gods, like Greece in her memory of Castor and mighty Hercules.

³⁹ Price, “God and Emperors,” 91.

petition regarding various personal affairs, and the prayer to the gods was simply for the continued well-being of the emperors.⁴⁰

From this perspective, Paul's exhortation to the church in Ephesus is quite subversive. Instead of accommodating surrounding cultural values, Paul strongly counters the hegemony of the imperial cult by stating Christians must not pray to the emperor but to God because God, not Caesar, is the One who provides and sustains the world.

Secondly, this passage may be seen as a subversive reading because Paul has given to emperors the same status as that of all other human beings.⁴¹ As rendered in the outline above, this author presents the syntactical structure of verses 1-2 as follows:

¹Παρακαλῶ οὖν πρῶτον πάντων ποιεῖσθαι δεήσεις
προσευχὰς
ἐντεύξεις
εὐχαριστίας ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων,
²ὑπὲρ βασιλέων
καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντων

In contrast to contemporary belief, Paul does not regard emperors and those who have ruling powers as the ones who have a higher status than other human beings but makes them equal to everyone else. It seems deliberate that Paul does not cause the phrase "kings and those who are in high rank" to precede "all human beings," thus giving the impression that from the perspective of God, an emperor is just as much his creation as other human beings are.

Similarly, Peter has shown that an emperor is a mere human being as he exhorts the believers in 1 Peter 2:17:

A πάντας τιμήσατε (Honor everyone),
B τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπάτε (love the brotherhood),
B' τὸν θεὸν φοβεῖσθε (fear God),
A' τὸν βασιλέα τιμᾶτε (honor the king).

In this chiasmic structure, the command honor to an emperor (A') is parallel to the paraenesis to honor everyone (A), while loving the brotherhood (B) corresponds with fearing God (B'). In other words, the status of an emperor is regarded as the same as that of everyone. In fact, the command to honor everyone and the emperor is less important than fearing God (B') and loving brothers and sisters (B), which are arranged in the center of this chiasm. My understanding is that the attitude of honoring everyone, including the Caesar, should be seen as the implication of fearing God and loving brothers and sisters.

Thirdly, Paul believes in God and Jesus as the ultimate King who surpasses all of the earthly kings. The word βασιλεύς occurs three times in 1 Timothy. Among them, only one instance refers to a humanly king (1 Tim 2:2); the remaining occurrences indicate God (1:17) and Christ Jesus (6:15). Interestingly, Paul gives some majestic attributes to God and Jesus the King, but none to earthly kings. To Paul, God the King who has honor and glory is the King of ages (τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων), the immortal (ἀφθάρτω), invisible (ἀοράτω), and only (μόνῳ) King. The last characteristic means that Paul stresses that anyone other than God,

⁴⁰ Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden, Netherlands; New York: E.J. Brill, 2015), 152; italics original.

⁴¹ David W. Pao, "Kingdom" (class lecture, Church and the World in the Pastoral Epistles, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, February 7, 2018).

including the emperor, is not the ultimate king. Similarly, Paul addresses Jesus, the Messiah, as the supreme King who receives honor and eternal dominion (6:15), for he is the blessed and only Ruler (ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης), the King of kings (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων), the Lord of lords (κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων), the only One who has immortality (ὁ μόνος ἔχων ἀθανασίαν), who dwells in unapproachable light (φῶς οἰκῶν ἀπρόσιτον), and whom no one has ever seen or can see (ὃν εἶδεν οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν δύναται). These characters of God and Jesus Christ the King surely do not belong to any mortal king.

Fourthly, God, not an emperor, is the only One can provide a peaceful and quiet life. Paul exhorts Christians to pray to God so that they may live in a peaceful and quiet life (ἵνα ἡρεμον καὶ ἡσύχιον βίον διάγωμεν). The concept of a peaceful and quiet life is “the Hellenistic ideal (conveyed variously) of a tranquil life free from the hassles of a turbulent society.”⁴² It is well known that the propaganda of the Roman Empire is Pax Romana, and the Roman Empire also sometimes promoted the motto Pax et Securitas (peace and security), meaning that it guaranteed peace and stability in the entire land of Rome.⁴³ In fact, Livia, widow of Augustus and the mother of Tiberius was regarded as Pax, the Roman goddess of peace.⁴⁴ It is ironic that in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul urges the believers to pray to God to ask a peaceful life that was supposedly provided by the emperor.

Fifthly, God uses the emperor to bring an ideal condition for the proclamation of the gospel. The ultimate goal of prayer as shown in this passage is not a peaceful and quiet life; this kind of life is only a way to fulfill the salvation plan of God according to his desire to save all human beings. In other words, God employs an emperor, his slave (Rom 13:4, θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν σοὶ εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν, “he [an emperor] is God’s servant for your good [ESV]) to fulfill his plan to save entire humankind. Just as God used the King of Cyrus to bring back his people to their land (Is. 45:1-7), God employs all kings for the sake of his people’s good, which is proclaiming the gospel to all nations.

Sixthly, God is the One who is the Savior, not the emperor. The title of “God, the savior” attributed to God the Father uniquely occurs in the Pastorals (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4).⁴⁵ This title is also used to identify Jesus (Titus 2:13; cf. 1 Pet. 1:1). In the Pastorals, Paul emphasizes the role of each person of the Triune God in the salvation for humankind: God as the author or source of grace and mercy through which salvation comes (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Tim. 1:8-9; Titus 2:11; 3:4-5), Christ as the manifestation of that grace and mercy as well as the means of salvation (1 Tim. 1:15; 2:5-6; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 2:13-14;), and the Holy Spirit as the agent who regenerates and renews the believers (Tit. 3:5). It seems that Paul has a specific purpose in employing this title of God the savior. As addressed above, Paul intends to counter false teachers’ gospel that promotes exclusive and elitist soteriology. Therefore, by using the title of God the savior, Paul stresses that it is God himself who saves Christians, not heretical

⁴² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 169.

⁴³ Mark Reasoner, *Roman Imperial Texts: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 44. Other imperial propagandas were *Victoria* (victory over barbarians), *Concordia* (“social harmony”), *Felicitas* (“happiness”), *Clementia* (“mercy”), *Fides* (“faith”), *Salus* (“health”), and *Spes* (“hope”).

⁴⁴ Reasoner, *Roman Imperial Texts*, 52.

⁴⁵ See discussion on this topic in Greg A. Couser, “The Sovereign Savior of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus,” in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul’s Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 105–36.

philosophy and rituals. Paul also wants to criticize the common characterization of the emperor as the savior; the term of savior (σωτήρ) was widely attributed to emperors in the first century.⁴⁶ Paul's expression of God and Jesus as the Savior confronts the prominent belief in the city of Ephesus. In fact, by equating emperors with human beings that are the object of God's salvation plan, Paul has demonstrated that an emperor is a mere human being who also needs God to be saved.

One God and One Mediator

The theological ground of this prayer exhortation is the confession that "God is one, and one is the mediator between God and human beings" (v. 5). Some have viewed the phrase εἷς γὰρ θεός ("for God is one) as an echo of the Shema Israel as stated in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (ESV; LXX, Ἄκουε, Ἰσραηλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν).⁴⁷ On the other hand, some have pointed out that this phrase is an allusion to Isaiah 45:5, "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God" (ESV; LXX, ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεός, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι πλὴν ἐμοῦ θεός, καὶ οὐκ ἦδεις με).⁴⁸ It seems to me that both Old Testament texts are anti-idol and polemical. In Deuteronomy 6:5, Yahweh commands his people to worship only Yahweh, the covenantal God who has delivered them from the slavery by defeating the Egyptian gods. As a preparation to entering of the promised land, God forbids Israel from following Canaanite gods and instructs them to worship only Yahweh.

The context of Isaiah 45:5 is similar: in this chapter, Yahweh is portrayed as the Lord over the nations and kings (v. 1-2 cf. v. 6, 14) and the Creator (v. 18). He is the One who defeats Egypt, Cush, and the Sabeans (v. 14) and humiliates the makers of idols (v. 16). Regarding the mention of idols in verse 16, John N. Oswalt rightly points out God's supremacy:

Given the profusion of idols around the world, and given the greatness of the nations and cultures that have worshiped them, it is surprising that God is not to be found in any of them. That he is not is shown by the fact that none of those idol-gods can save those who have made them. They are not God at all. This inability of the idols to save their worshipers means that the worshipers will be constantly ashamed and humiliated because of the failure of that in which they had trusted.⁴⁹

Because God is the Creator of all things, including the kings, he has an absolute power to use King Cyrus to fulfill his purpose, unlike any idol.

In a similar vein, 1 Timothy 2:5 is subversive. As discussed above, Paul emphasizes that God and Jesus, the *only* (μόνος, 1:17; 6:16) God, surpass all earthly kings, meaning that no one but God is the one we have to worship. Christians in Ephesus would live among the surrounding beliefs that an emperor is a god. Price has shown this fact by saying, "*Theos* was

⁴⁶ E.g. W. Foerster, *TDNT* 7:1012. Besides emperors, the title σωτήρ was also attributed to gods, provincial proconsuls, and local patrons.

⁴⁷ E.g. Robert W. Wall and Richard B. Steele, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, The Two Horizons New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 82.

⁴⁸ E. g. George T Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 55.

⁴⁹ John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 217.

predicated quite commonly of both Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors."⁵⁰ However, there is a challenging view that in Asia Minor the imperial cult was political and never became a religious ritual as people performed in the cult of Artemis. Collin Miller describes this view as follows: "There is no doubt that the city belongs to the goddess. Nor is there any sense that this would be offensive to the emperor: there is no indication that devotion to Artemis would be a slight to the emperor. This shows that loyalty to Rome did not exclude devotion to other cults."⁵¹

Even though Miller's view is interesting, there is more evidence to dispute his position. For example, Richard Horsley points out that since Augustus, the Roman Empire had unified its vast territory not in a repressive way but by establishing the imperial cult, which was very pervasive because it "became constituted in the images, shrines and temples, and festivals of the emperor cult."⁵² In addition, the practice of the imperial cult was endorsed by local leaders, who functioned as the imperial priests, built imperial temples and shrines, and sponsored imperial festivals and games. By doing so, they made emperors as gods among their traditional gods. Likewise, Price contends that the imperial cult in Asia Minor, which was institutionalized and regular, was "more a matter of politics than of religion" because it was exploited by the Roman Empire and initiated by Rome's subjects.⁵³ He demonstrates that the impact of the imperial cult was the transformation of the architecture of the cities, since the local elite often acting as the imperial priests were the ones who sponsored building of imperial temples in the main square of the cities. In addition, Price points out that common practices of assimilation between gods and emperors in Asia Minor that proves that imperial worship was prominent in that area. As he notes,

An analysis of the religious descriptions of the emperor may begin with the practice of assimilating the emperor to particular named deities. . . . The names of emperor and god are sometimes simply collocated ('Tiberius Claudius Caesar Sebastos Germanicus Zeus Saviour and Agrippina Sebaste Demeter Karpophoros [Harvest-bringer]'); sometimes they are separated by neos ('new'): ('Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian new Dionysos Olympios Panhellenios'). The most common assimilation (to give the figures for the evidence from Asia Minor) was between the emperor and Zeus (26), though twelve of the instances are for Hadrian alone. Next in frequency were assimilations with Helios (12) and Dionysos (8). Empresses were assimilated to female deities, especially Hera (18), Aphrodite (11) and Demeter (5).⁵⁴

As such, the deification of emperors was prominent in the Asia Minor; therefore, Paul's statement that God is one, is subversive.

Paul's statement that Jesus is mediator (μεσίτης) between God and human beings (v. 5) is also subversive. As is the title of God the Savior, the use of this title is rare in the New

⁵⁰ Price, "God and Emperors," 81.

⁵¹ Colin F. Miller, "The Imperial Cult in the Pauline Cities of Asia Minor and Greece," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72.2 (2010): 327.

⁵² Richard A. Horsley, "Introduction," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 11.

⁵³ S. R. F. Price, "Rituals and Power," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 51.

⁵⁴ Price, "God and Emperors," 85-86.

Testament. Besides this verse, this term is found in Galatians 3:19 and 20 and in Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; and 12:24. In all of those passages, Jesus is identified as the mediator as an antitype of Moses, the mediator between God and his people in receiving the Torah. In this case, Jesus is understood as the New Moses who is the mediator of the New Covenant.⁵⁵ The implication of this portrayal of Jesus in our passage in 1 Timothy is that in Christ there is no need to observe the Law to obtain salvation, as taught by the Ephesian heresy. In other words, Jesus described as the One who surpasses Moses, the Law, and the old covenant.

Another aspect of this portrayal that should not be neglected is that which is related to the imperial cult. According to Malcom Gill, in the Roman Republic era, senators mediated between humankind and gods, but in the Imperial period, the emperor took over the position as the mediator:

In spite of the diversity of religious approaches to the deities, the replacement of the primacy of the senate with that of the emperor began the trend that sought to reestablish the old form of religious mediation. Just as the senate had formerly been the one responsible to discern the will of the gods, so with the rise of the emperors began the notion that the emperor, and he alone, was the chief priest or *Pontifex Maximus* between humanity and the gods. Although there was a relationship between the senate and the emperor, the emperor clearly had more authority than the senate.⁵⁶

The status of the emperor as the high priest was demonstrated by the discovery of coins with pictures of emperors offering sacrifices.⁵⁷ As the one who mediates between gods and humankind, the emperor also controlled local priests, including those of other religions, by commanding them to pay high taxes to the emperor.⁵⁸ The depiction of an emperor as the mediator is seen in an inscription discovered in the city of Ephesus saying, "The cities of Asia, along with the [citizen-bodies] and the nations, (honor) C. Julius f. Caesar. the high priest, imperator, and twice consul, the manifest god (sprung) from Ares and Aphrodite, the universal savior of human life."⁵⁹ It is interesting that in this single inscription, three titles related to the discussion of this passage occur: god, savior, and mediator. This should confirm that Paul is trying to convince his readers that God and Jesus are above all earthly kings.

The Church Is Called to Live in Every Godliness and Dignity

In verse 2, Paul states that the purpose of praying for all human beings and also for kings is to live in a peaceful and quiet life in every godliness and dignity (ἐν πάσῃ εὐσεβείᾳ καὶ σεμνότητι). The expression of εὐσεβεία is prominent in the Pastorals, occurring ten times in this corpus (1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1; cf. 2 Pet. 1:3, 6, 7; 3:11). Some hold that this term is rooted in the concept of the "fear of God" in the Old Testament

⁵⁵ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*.

⁵⁶ Malcolm Gill, *Jesus as Mediator: Politics and Polemic in 1 Timothy 2:1-7* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2008), 117; cf. Reasoner, *Roman Imperial Texts*, 51-52.

⁵⁷ Gill, *Jesus as Mediator*, 118-19.

⁵⁸ Gill, *Jesus as Mediator*, 121.

⁵⁹ Stephen M. Baugh, "'Savior of All People': 1 Tim. 4:10 in Context," *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992): 336.

and Hellenistic Judaism.⁶⁰ As such, εὐσέβεια initially referenced to the godly conduct of the Diaspora Jews, who lived out their faith in the midst of the non-Jewish world. On the other hand, some have insisted on saying that εὐσέβεια is an accommodative response to Roman values in order that they may live peacefully as a bourgeois Christian.⁶¹ To my understanding, the former notion is more convincing than the latter one since the Pastorals' messages, as I have demonstrated above, are more subversive to the imperial values than accommodative. If εὐσέβεια is closely linked to the concept of Old Testament "fear of God," we may understand that Paul calls Christians to pray that their faith in Christ and renewed life by the Holy Spirit might be observable in the unbelieving society. This ideal life of a Christian stands in contrast to that of the false teachers that Paul calls as ἀσέβεια, the antonym of εὐσέβεια (e.g., Titus 2:12; 1 Tim. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:16; cf. 2 Pet. 2:6).⁶²

In the following text, Paul exhorts men to pray with "lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling" (v. 8, ESV). In this verse, Paul wants to emphasize that men must live out their inward faith in order that their unbelieving fellow citizens may see their Christian godliness and dignity and that they can be agents of God, who desires to save everyone. Similarly, Paul urges women to live in godliness and dignity by dressing in respectable apparel, submitting to their husbands, being silent in public meetings, and being willing to play their domestic roles, attitudes that were valued as norms of dignified women in their society.⁶³ Paul warns women in the church of Ephesus not to follow the New Women movement that endorsed so-called women emancipation. Those who supported this movement were upper class women who were rich and influential in that society.⁶⁴ It is probable that some of the matrons in the church of Ephesus had been deceived by the false teachers and followed this movement. Those women were resistant to the norms of female dignity and lived opposite to those values. However, many viewed New Woman movement as improper in their social order, as Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a governor of Achaia wrote, regarding his mother, whom he saw as a modest woman:

Unlike the great majority of women you never succumbed to immorality, the worst evil of our time; jewel and pearls have not moved you; you never thought of wealth as the greatest gift to human race; you have not been perverted by the imitation of worse women who lead even the virtuous into pitfalls; you have never blushed for the number of children, as if it taunted you with your years; never have you, in the manner of other women whose only recommendation lies in their beauty, tried to conceal your pregnancy as though it were indecent; you have not crushed the hope of children that were being nurtured in your body; you have not defiled your face with paints and cosmetics; never have you fancied the kind of

⁶⁰ See the discussion on this matter in Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 171-75.

⁶¹ Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 39.

⁶² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 174.

⁶³ David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL.; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Apollos, 2014), 748.

⁶⁴ A lengthy discussion on this New Women movement can be seen in Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

dress that exposed no greater nakedness by being removed. Your only ornament, the kind of beauty that time does not tarnish, is the great honour of modesty.⁶⁵

If this observation is correct, one may conclude that Paul's command in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is occasional and cannot be applied in universal context. As such, this prayer paraenesis is an exhortation to Christians to pray so that they may live in godliness and dignity as their missional calling to their society. Regarding this, Towner rightly points out: "A better way of understanding the instructions to pray in this passage is to place them within the dialogue evident in Romans 13 (and 1 Peter 2). There Paul lays down a theology of the church-world dialectical reality in which the church is to find itself in a position of missiological service to society."⁶⁶

In addition, the term εὐσέβεια also has an imperial connotation. According to Price, in terms of the imperial cult, εὐσέβεια may understood as devoted worship to the emperor:

Ambition and rivalry on the part of individuals and communities were of course important, but they do not undermine the significance of eusebeia as the virtue which was displayed in the cults. Imperial priests and others were regularly praised for having displayed piety towards the Sebastoi; one local benefactor who performed imperial sacrifices and built imperial temples in his native city and in the provincial capital made 'not only the city but also the rest of the province witness to his piety towards the god' (sc. Augustus). The display of eusebeia was even enshrined in the oath of loyalty taken by the island of Cyprus at the accession of Tiberius: 'We and our descendants will heed and obey by land and sea and will regard with loyalty (eunoēsein) and revere (sebasesthai, the verbal form of eusebeia) Tiberius Caesar Sebastos, son of Sebastos, with all his house.'

Therefore, by living in godliness and dignity, Christians may demonstrate to their unbelieving neighbors that the true εὐσέβεια only can take place in the faith of God and Jesus, the Savior.

Missio Pauli as a Model of Missio Ecclesiae

In 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Paul shows himself to his readers as a model of the one who carries out God's mission in his life: "For which I myself was appointed a herald (κἠρῶν) and an apostle (ἀπόστολος), I am telling you the truth, I am not lying, a teacher (διδάσκαλος) of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (v. 7). In this verse, Paul describes his callings as a *herald*, an *apostle*, and a *teacher*. Among these three titles, herald and teacher merit discussion since Paul commonly identifies himself as an apostle but not as a herald or a teacher of the Gentiles.

The term κἠρῶν occurs only three times in the New Testament (1 Tim. 2:7, 2 Tim. 1:1; 2 Pet. 2:5). In the Hellenistic world, this term refers to the task of proclaiming the message and related to a diplomatic duty, as Towner explains,

In the Greek world, the term "herald" described a variety of messengers whose task was to proclaim a message. In service of the royal court, heralds carried out diplomatic missions under the protection of the country he represented and the deity. Political and religious functions overlapped; he pronounced at the time of sacrifices and other cultic activities. Qualities needed by the herald included a

⁶⁵ Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, 66.

⁶⁶ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 163; italics original.

loud voice and faithfulness to the message to be communicated. Philosophers could be called heralds of the gods.⁶⁷

Therefore, the selection of the word κηρῦξ in this passage is not a coincidence; rather, Paul shrewdly picks that word to convey a special message to his reader. He wants to demonstrate that he is the herald of the true message from the God. This is why we should read the phrase ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀληθείᾳ (“in faith and truth”) as referring to the content of Paul’s proclamation instead of to his attitude toward the message (“a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles,” TNIV). The true message is not found in the false teachers, nor can one find it in the imperial priests, who were also city leaders and patrons and led the worship of as well as sponsored the imperial cult in Ephesus and other cities in the Roman world.

The other distinctive title Paul uses is “a teacher of the Gentiles.” Paul is well known as the apostle of the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:13). Also, from multiple stories of his encounter with Jesus in Damascus written in the books of Acts and Galatians (Acts 13:47; Gal. 2:7-8), one may understand that Paul was called by God to be an apostle of the Gentiles. However, in this passage, he identifies himself as “a teacher of the Gentiles. This title is related to the heretical teachings that permeated in the church of Ephesus, as Towner explains as follows:

Paul was known as the apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:7-8; cf. Acts 13:47), and in this context in which “the teaching” was in dispute and being compromised through the activity of false teachers, and in which the openness of the gospel to the Gentile world was in some sense being threatened, the description “teacher of the Gentiles” reminds the readers that Paul is the one who has received authority to preach and teach in the Gentile churches.⁶⁸

Paul confirms his calling as a teacher of the Gentiles by adding an oath formula: “I am telling you the truth, I am not lying” (ἀλήθειαν λέγω οὐ ψεύδομαι). This formula is also found in Rom 9:1: “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit” (ESV, Ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν Χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι), and in a shorter version in some other passages (2 Cor. 12:6; 2 Cor. 11:31; Gal. 1:20). The placement of this formula before the last title is worth elaboration, as it is probable that the apostleship of Paul has been attacked by the false teachers so that he needs to defend his calling. Moreover, it is even more likely that Paul wants to contrast himself with the heretical teachers. Whereas the false teachers are not telling Christians the truth because they are lying, Paul confidently urges them to trust the authenticity and accuracy of his message. Therefore, the believers should follow his teachings and his life so that they may participate in God’s mission in saving the sinful world.

Concluding Remark

In this paper, I have demonstrated that Paul emphasizes in 1 Timothy 2:1-7 the importance of prayer to God on behalf of every human being, including kings. The motif of this prayer is not oriented to Christian self-need and circumstances, such as physical needs or persecution from the unbelievers, nor is it a general exhortation to pray for the government as part of general Christian civic responsibilities. Rather, this command aims to exhort Christians to live in godliness and dignity as part their missional task so that God’s mission

⁶⁷ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 187 n. 76.

⁶⁸ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 188.

to save all people may take place. To live out this mission, the church must be ready to confront the values of the world as they differ from those of Christians.

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