

## Prayer

1 Timothy 2:1-6

“I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. <sup>2</sup> Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. <sup>3</sup> This is good and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. <sup>5</sup> For, there is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity - the man Christ Jesus. <sup>6</sup> He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time.”

**Over and over again Paul touches on the subject of prayer, and here he charges the Christian to pray for all men in general, and especially for those in authority.** However, when we think about prayer most people think of asking God for things. These are usually things we want changed in one way or another.

**For the most part, we try to change our circumstances, our friends, families, and even our business concerns by pleading with God to do something about them.** The problem with this kind of praying is that it can become self-indulgence unless we allow God to do something in our lives. Therefore, in these verses of Scripture Paul brings into focus an aspect of prayer that changes our own innermost feelings and thoughts.

**The greatest idea that we must remember about prayer is this Prayer is God's idea.** That means that all of the questions and objections and contradictions surrounding prayer well they're God's problems.

For myself, I need only to keep in mind two facts: **(1 ) God commands me to pray.** Whether I understand how prayer works or not, whatever the problems encountered, I am commanded to pray.

My failure to understand does not excuse my failure to pray. Whether I understand anything else about prayer or not, I know this much: God assures me that my prayers will make a difference.

(2) The second fact is this, whatever God does; He will be consistent with Himself. He will not deny or contradict Himself. I just know one thing about prayer. If God has promised it to me in His Word, than I can believe it as a truth, and I have every right to claim it for myself.

Not only has God commanded us to pray, but He also has given us a prayer list to guide us in our intercession. Look once more at verses 12, "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."

Paul is giving us a lesson on being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Why? We are never more like Christ than when we are praying for others. Intercessory prayer is bearing one another's burden; it is sharing the hurt and asking God to help someone else other than we ourselves. *Daring, bold, audacious* these are the only adjectives that rightly describe intercessory praying.

There are some surprises in this prayer list that God has given us. First, Paul tells us to pray for secular leaders. He says to pray "for kings and all that are in authority." Kings? Are we to pray for the king? That's the fellow who's slaughtering Christians as fast as the lions can eat them. The average response would have been, "Pray for him? Right, I'll pray for him, I'll ask God to dump fire and brimstone on his unbelieving head." That is not at all what Paul had in mind.

Paul's admonition here underscores his conviction that the secular state is instituted by God for the welfare of man. In fact, he says this in Romans 13:1-3, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists

the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.” This very same thought is echoed in 1 Peter 2:13-15, where Peter says this to those Christians who were suffering persecution, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

Therefore, when Paul uses the phrase, “All who are in authority” he is referring to all those in places of prominence and high positions. The phrase embraces everyone in a position of authority over us employers, schoolteachers, parents, church leaders and government leaders. There are a couple of points that we should touch on.

First, the significance of Paul's use of the plural, "kings." Paul does not refer to the present king or emperor only, but to those who follow also, which makes this of permanent application to the church.

Second, Paul does not have in mind prayer primarily aimed at the king's conversion to Christ. Kings do not have to be Christian kings to be equitable and honorable rulers. Here Paul is thinking of prayer for them in their roles as rulers, as men who carry heavy burdens of responsibility and exert powerful influence on the lives of citizens. God's providence is impartial, His rain falling on the just and the unjust, and so should our prayers be, praying even for those who spitefully use us and persecute us (Matthew 5:44). Even non-Christian rulers need the support of your prayers, for no matter how wicked rulers may be, anarchy is worse.

By praying for them, the church helps those in authority to exercise their powers wisely and justly. This is obvious as Paul shares

his motive for such praying in verse 2, "...that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." When rulers rule properly, their subjects can live quiet and peaceable lives, the opposite of which is *unrest* and *disturbance* two words that graphically describe our present world.

The Word of God indicates that good rulers make good government, which in turn makes life quiet and peaceful, which in turn creates a favorable environment for preaching the gospel. And verses 3-4 says, "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Praying for others: The *Word of God commands* it; the *will of God demands* it.

One of the chief characteristics of Paul's letters is his constant appeal for the prayers of his converts. In Ephesians 6:18, he writes, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit ... for all the saints and for me that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel." And in Colossians 4:34 he says, "Meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ ... that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

Christians should pray regularly for their pastor, that God would throw open doors of opportunity and enable them to preach Christ courageously and clearly. It has often been said, "Great preachers make great churches." That might well be true, but I am even more convinced that great churches make great preachers. Listen, better praying in the pew will make better preaching in the pulpit!

But, don't stop just pray for the pastor's preaching opportunities and ability; pray also for victory over the fleshly desires. I have never seen a time when so many ministers are stepping down from their pulpits amid charges of immoral conduct. I have no doubt that the enemy has mounted a massive offensive to

discredit ministers of the gospel. Like a roaring lion, he seeks to devour spiritual leaders, and many already have been caught in his jaws.

Few people are as vulnerable to gossip and innuendo as Christian workers. What the world winks at in others, it mocks in ministers. We all feel the blow. That is why Paul spurred the Thessalonian believers to hedge him and his colleagues with protection, as seen in 2 Thessalonians 3:12, "Finally brothers, pray for us ... that we may be delivered from unprincipled and wicked men; for not all have faith."

Paul's request here is imperative, and the tense of the verb is continuous. He is not asking to be remembered occasionally, "If as the Lord may bring me to mind." No, he is pleading for continuous, vigilant prayer support.

A word, a suspicion, a raised eyebrow it takes little more than this to destroy the ministry of a person and the testimony of a church. Intercession can build a wall of protection around our spiritual leaders. Such prayer produces if an "antiseptic atmosphere" in which blasphemy, selfishness, greed, dishonesty, immorality, cruelty and injustice find it hard to flourish!

When I see the President of the United States on television, I am always impressed with the number of Secret Service agents surrounding him. As was so vividly demonstrated in the 1981 assassination attempt on President Reagan, it is the job of the Secret Service agents to protect the life of their President, even if it means throwing themselves in the path of the bullet. That is what our spiritual leaders need, a Secret Service of intercessors, spiritual bodyguards, if you will, protect their charges with the shield of prayer.

Much of our praying should be directed to building up believers. Prayer offers believers unlimited resources in Christ, as seen in Ephesians 1:17-19, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father

of glory may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him... that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints ... the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe."

**Ladies and gentlemen, God works through our prayers to bring the supply of the Spirit into the lives of needy believers.** By praying for others we can bring the power of Jesus into a person's life. We can apply His healing power to wounded hearts. We can say with Paul that we are "confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in (these) will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

**Last of all, we need to pray for those that are lost.** Look at what Paul says in verses 34, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Let me just simply remind you once more of 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." **It is God's will that every lost person be saved!**

**It is never necessary to seek God's will concerning the salvation of a lost person, we already know what God's will is concerning salvation!** We need to pray that Satan will be bound up in their lives, and that their spiritual eyes be opened to see their need for salvation!