

# Pray for the President!

1 Timothy 2:1-8

**B.I: The Gospel-shaped life reflects the character of God by praying for our lost leaders rather than wishing them ill**

**LTS: Psa. 108**

*Prayer: Our Father, we understand that it is You who have established earthly governments. You have entrusted men with power to punish evil and reward what is good, but too often sinful leaders punish the good and rewarded what is evil. It is our desire to be faithful with the gospel in this land until the glory of God covers the earth like the water covers the sea. So we ask, O Father, that You would sovereignly move in the hearts of our new national leaders so as the reverse this trend and preserve our freedom to speak of you freely and serve you openly. Thank you for the opportunity to assemble together once again to worship you and praise your name. Use your word now to speak to our hearts, to instruct, encourage, rebuke, and change us so that you will be glorified in us as you deserve. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**Intro:**

After nearly 18 months of contentious campaigning and debating the presidential election is finally over. And who could have imagined that it would end with Donald Trump, of all people, winning the bid for the Whitehouse? Commentators are saying that this has been perhaps the most combative and belligerent election cycle in the history of American politics.

Now my purpose this morning is not to talk about politics. We've had quite enough of that over the past year and a half. What I do want to discuss with you is what we do now. What does the Lord want us to do now that the election is over and we look at the coming four year term of our new president? Part of the answer to that question is found in 1 Timothy 2:1-8

**Read 1 Tim. 2:1-8**

It is a peculiar providence that this would be our next passage of Scripture to look at right on the heels of such a contentious and scandal-ridden election. The question that begs an answer is, how should we respond to the election of Donald Trump into the presidency of these united sates? Should we join the protestors on the street chanting "Not my president?" Should we post messages on social media calling for changes in the Electoral College? Should we condemn any evangelical who didn't vote for him? What would God have us do? Paul's answer is startling. Our orders are to pray for him and for all those who are in positions of authority in our land.

The passage before us is a call to prayer rather than protest. Clearly Paul is calling us to pray for our leaders and those who are in authority. And not just for them but for all people. I believe this passage answers the following questions:

I. For whom should we pray?

II. For what purpose should we pray?

We should note too that Paul is speaking primarily in this passage to men in the church. Notice in v. 8 he concludes by saying, “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or quarreling.

In the paragraph that follows he will give instruction to the women of the church (9-15). But for now Paul is calling on Christian men to be men of prayer.

## **I. For whom should we pray?**

1. Read v. 1

2. “First of all” does not mean that Paul wants us to pray first when we gather for worship but that prayer is of primary importance to the ministry of the church. Gospel-shaped men are men of prayer.

3. I suspect that Paul knew Timothy was facing a common problem in the church of Ephesus. The men tended to be preoccupied with the world, their jobs, their own interests and opinions and were ready to defend their personal ideals. But there were very few men of prayer – men who were more consumed with God than with the ambitions of this life.

4. I suspect the reason so many men live virtually prayerless lives is because we are so determined to prove to ourselves and others that we are competent and self-sufficient. But this is the opposite attitude of prayer. In his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, J.I Packer explains:

The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God's hand, but a humble acknowledgement of helplessness and dependence. When we are on our knees, we know that it is not we who control the world; it is not in our power, therefore, to supply our needs by our own independent efforts; every good thing that we desire for ourselves and for others must be sought from God, and will come, if it comes at all, as a gift from His hand.

5. Men are hard-wired to believe that we can do everything that needs to be done. We can handle life pretty well for ourselves, thank you very much! But life for a Christian is life of full dependence upon God for what we need even as we use the gifts and drives He has put within us to accomplish things for His glory. It is possible to be both ambitious and prayerful, but prayer requires a disciplined humility before God.

6. Let there be no mistake. Christian men are called to be men of prayer. For whom should we pray? First answer: all people. Now that's a pretty tall order. But he is not saying that we should pray for every person on the planet. Rather, we are called to pray for all kinds of people – for wife and children and grand children. For sons-in-law and daughter-in-law. For pastors and elders. For the sick. For those facing serious challenges at home and at work. Pray for the evangelists and counselors and music ministers. Pray

for neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances and even your enemies! Men, God has called us to humble ourselves before the Father and pray for all people. Are you a man of prayer?

7. But there's more! Notice what kinds of prayers we should pray. The list Paul offers in v. 1 includes various synonyms for prayer. Paul is using a Jewish literary device that groups synonyms to enhance the basic concept, namely, the Christians should pray all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people.

- A. **Entreaties:** emphasizes the earnestness with which we should make requests because we feel such need for what we ask.
- B. **Prayers:** a general word covering all types of communication with God. The emphasis is on the spirit of reverence toward God.
- C. **Petitions:** confident requests for others and for self.
- D. **Thanksgivings:** the most unique term in the list, and serves as a reminder that we should express gratitude, not just need, as we pray.

8. Prayer is so very important, because it invites God into the situation we are praying about, and it secures His working on behalf of those we pray for. What an incentive to pray! So men, we are to pray for all *kinds* of people.

9. Secondly, we are to pray for another, smaller group. Paul says, we should pray *“for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”*

10. Now I am sure you have a very definite opinion about our new president-elect. No doubt you have shared your thoughts about him with others. The revelations of the past several months regarding his life and character have almost demanded that faithful citizens speak about it. Many of you have no doubt expressed disgust, anger, suspicion, distrust, and other seemingly appropriate dispositions. You have probably spoken about him with friends, family, and coworkers, and even here at church. And all of that has its proper place. Paul's question, however, is have you PRAYED for him?

11. Now, someone might say, “Yes, I pray a very scriptural prayer for the president-elect, from Psalm 109:8 *“May his days be few and let another man take his office.”*” I don't think that's what Paul is talking about here.

13. Pray for Donald Trump? Are you kidding? Why would anyone pollute their private moments with God by even mentioning that man's name in His presence? Well, I can think of a reason. How about this: We should do it because God commands it.

14. Consider this: the “King” at the time Paul wrote this letter was none other than Nero. Do you think Donald Trump is a scoundrel? How would you like to have Nero as your president? Talk about scandal! Here is a man who murdered his mother, had multiple wives (all but one he executed), took delight in incinerating Christians, burned most of

Rome to the ground, and married his male servant. And yet, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul commands Timothy and the church of Ephesus to PRAY for that man! And that brings us to the second question:

## II. For what Purpose Should We pray?

1. In other words, what is the endgame? What should our prayers be designed to accomplish as we pray for our leaders? Verse 2 explains, it is *“that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”*
2. Now at first blush this sounds like a prayer for personal comfort, but it’s really not. We pray for our leaders because it’s better to carry out our mission in the world without harassment. We pray for our leaders so that they might be strangely disposed to allow us to speak the word of God without fear of reprisals. As Piper explains, “If you want your prayers to do the most good in the world you must include in those prayers the people whose decisions create the conditions in which the gospel prospers.”
3. Don’t you find it strange that despite every possible effort to block his every step toward the Whitehouse Donald Trump won the election? No one predicted that! Everyone was shocked and surprised. I have to ask, what was God’s involvement in this election? Could it be that God heard the prayers of His people to provide a reprieve to the growing oppression against His church? God has a verifiable history of doing such things. Witness godless King Cyrus whom God raised up to suddenly send his people home from captivity on the very year God predicted it would happen.
4. Now let me be clear. Donald Trump is no messiah – far from it. But God is! The apostle Peter tells us (1 Pet. 2:14) that the purpose of government is to punish evil and reward the righteous. The governing authorities over our nation these past eight years has been derelict in that duty and has rather rewarded evil and punished what is good. Can God raise up a godless unbeliever to turn that back around? Of course He can! He can raise up Cyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate, Herod, Nero, or anyone else He wants to accomplish His purposes in the world. Paul is just saying, Pray for your leaders so that you will have the freedom to continue freely ministering the gospel.
5. Then Paul emphasizes the thought in verse 3-7

Read 3-7

6. What Paul is saying is, Pray for your leaders so that you will have freedom to minister the gospel because there is only one way that men can be saved. *“There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all.”* If you love your unsaved family, friends, and neighbors you will pray for the president.

7. Pray that God will use him in spite of himself to create conditions that are favorable to gospel proclamation and stem the rising tide of evil in our country. God's mission is still to save many in our land. In fact, it is God's disposition toward the ungodly that He *desires* for *all* them to be saved!

8. Now I understand that some scholars think Paul means to say that God desires *all kinds* of people to be saved; namely, Jews, gentiles, men, women, slaves, and freeman. I get that. But I think there is a way Paul could have expressed the idea of "*all kinds*" in the Greek but didn't. This is a controversial topic especially in reformed churches, but I believe God loves all His creation. God loves the lost even those who will eventually be damned. Its Not that He loves them the same way as He loves His own daughters and sons, but He loves them still. As Jesus said to Nicodemus (Jn. 3:16), "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." And there are other passages that reveal God's heart for the lost.

9. Now, you might ask, How do you logically reconcile that with the clear statements about God's specific electing grace. Answer, I don't, because I want to be careful not to go beyond what is written.

10. Here is how Spurgeon put it:

This is one of those things that we don't need to know. Have you ever noticed that some people who are ill and are ordered to take pills are foolish enough to chew them? This is a very nauseous thing to do, though I have done it myself. The right way to take medicine of such kind is to swallow it whole. In the same way there are some things in the Word of God which are undoubtedly true which must be swallowed whole by an effort of faith and must not be chewed by perpetual questioning.

11. I suspect some will disagree with me on this point, but one thing we know for sure; the love of God for sinners is a primary motive for sending Jesus to die in our place. And the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation. So we should pray for our leaders so that we might remain free to share the gospel as God gives us opportunity.

### **Conclusion:**

1. Men, in light of Paul's admonition, do you have a prayer plan? Are you a man of prayer? If that question pricks your conscience, let me encourage you to begin a simple prayer list to help you get started. If you have a smart phone you might try using an App such as Pocket Prayer or Prayermate.

2. Whether you are a Christian man or woman, are you faithfully praying for your president (Obama) and the president-elect (Trump)? What about Paul Ryan (speaker of

the house), and Loretta Lynch (Attorney General) and other leaders in Washington. And what about Greg Abbot, governor of Texas.

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