

WEEK 2

For Kings and All Who Are In High Positions

INTRODUCTION

First Timothy helps us understand the church. Paul wrote to instruct and to encourage his young protégé, Timothy, about pastoral ministry. Topics such as church leadership or the need to discern false teaching seem appropriate. Yet, Paul’s strongest command pertains to prayer.

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

— *1 Timothy 2:1-4*

A letter to a young pastor about leading the local church commands prayer “for kings and all who are in high positions.” Paul exhorted Timothy to pray for their _____. Pray for Proconsuls and Governors, pray for local leaders in Ephesus, pray for the Senators in Rome, pray even for Caesar.

QUESTION: According to 1 Timothy 2:1-4, what kind of lives may we lead by praying for our leaders?

QUESTION: Paul “urged” Timothy “first of all” to pray, and Christians have prayed for their political leaders throughout history. What are some of the requests that you have asked of God when you pray for your leaders?

“ “ *When it is remembered that the Roman emperor when Paul wrote this Epistle was the cruel monster Nero—who later put Paul and Peter to death—it will be realized that we should pray for our present rulers, no matter how unreasonable they may seem to be.*

— Ralph Earl

Churches and organizations cite 1 Timothy 2:1-4 as a biblical text that encourages prayer for political leaders. Paul’s concern, however, was not that the emperor have wisdom or the strength to govern well, but that he turn to Christ. Paul’s command to Timothy (and to us) centered upon the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).

The God “who desires all people to be saved” desires that we pray for “all people” to be saved.

I. Paul’s Prayer

Scripture urges us to pray in at least four ways for unbelievers, specifically for “kings and all who are in high positions.”

Supplications. _____.

Prayers. _____.

Intercessions. _____.

Thanksgivings. _____.

The sum of these words indicates we must be a people who pray hard for unbelievers. Yet, how can we entreat God on their behalf if we don’t know much about them? How can we plead for another’s salvation if their soul means so little to us?

Paul’s heart for political leaders was more concerned about their eternal destiny than his own present difficulties.

QUESTION: We are urged that “thanksgivings be made for all people.” How do you thank God for appointing an ungodly leader? For what can you be thankful?

Roman society mocked Christians for exclusively worshipping a crucified man as God. To identify with Jesus Christ and preach the gospel was a scandal to the Romans (1 Cor 1:18). Their mocking, however, turned to persecution when Nero blamed Christians for burning Rome. Churches burned in response, and families were destroyed as the emperor provoked the world to persecute the Christians.

Paul wanted to “lead a peaceful and quiet life” as a Christian. How did he believe this would happen? _____.

QUESTION: Scripture urges us to pray evangelistically. Is praying for the salvation of others an emphasis in your life? If not, what steps could you take to begin to change?

II. Paul’s Passion for the Lost

Paul had proclaimed Christ for thirty years prior to writing his letters to Timothy. It isn’t surprising that the apostle had a passion for the lost in general, but 1 Timothy 2:1-4 is more specific. At the end of his ministry, Paul urged Timothy to lead his church in praying for the lost, namely for “kings and those who are in high positions.”

“Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”

— *1 Corinthians 9:16*

Paul had been beaten to the point of death more than once, flogged multiple times, stoned, mocked, and even shipwrecked. He was hated, betrayed, ever on the run, regularly starving, and always exhausted just to proclaim the gospel (2 Cor 11:24-27). These hardships help us grasp the depth of Paul’s love for Jesus Christ and for the lost.

Furthermore, Jews regarded the gospel as blasphemous, and Gentiles viewed it as foolishness (1 Cor 1:23). Though the Roman government had begun to persecute Christians, Paul never returned hate with hate.

QUESTION: Why do we expect the world to treat us better than it treated our Lord?

God had chosen Paul to take the gospel to “Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15), and Paul rejoiced that in the end, he had fulfilled his calling (2 Tim 4:7). Where do we see Paul ministering to kings and other political leaders?

- Ministered to _____, the Proconsul of Cyprus (Acts 13:6-12).
- Ministered to Governor Felix (Acts 24)
- Ministered to King Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:23-26:32).
- Ministered to _____ (Acts 25:10-12; 2 Tim 4:16-17).
- Ministered to the entire Imperial Guard in Rome (Phil 1:13)
- Ministered often in capital cities (_____ cities in which Paul ministered).

Paul’s concern for “kings and those who are in high positions” started when the Lord called him into ministry and continued throughout his life. Thus, his command to Timothy wasn’t a new emphasis but an old one.

“ *If...a principle of true religion should...gain ground, there is no estimating the effects on public morals, and the consequent influence on our political welfare.*

— William Wilberforce

KEY PRINCIPLES

- The salvation of people all around should weigh heavily upon our hearts, so heavily that we regularly pray for their salvation.
- Evangelistic prayer is key to living a “peaceful and quiet life.”
- Though politics should concern us as Christians, paramount is whether our leaders know Christ as their Lord and Savior.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Praying for Your Leaders

Proverbs 21:1 tells us, “The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever he will.” God is sovereign over all that happens in this world, and He “turns” the hearts of kings however He pleases to accomplish His purposes.

Below are some of our state and federal leaders in central Illinois...

U. S. Senator Dick Durbin

U. S. Senator Tammy Duckworth

Congresswoman Cheri Bustos

Congressman Daren LaHood

State Senator Sally Turner

State Senator Dave Koehler

State Senator Jason Barickman

State Rep. Tim Butler

State Rep. Keith Sommer

State Rep Mark Luft

Most, if not all, of the above leaders are affiliated with a church and would affirm some faith in God. Circle at least two from the above list, and commit to pray for them daily throughout the course of this class.

How should you pray? Unless you personally know someone, it is difficult to do more than mention a name with a brief request to God. Consider some of the following verses that you could use to pray for our political leaders...

1 Timothy 2:1-4 *Lord, open the eyes of our political leaders and save them.*

John 15:1-5 *Lord, I thank You we have some leaders who know You. May they abide in Your Word despite all the temptation that surround them.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Lord, I pray that our leaders would not lean on their own understanding but acknowledge You, the source of all wisdom.*

Psalms 2 *Lord, we know that many in power rage against You and will be broken in pieces one day. May they humble themselves and be saved.*

Isaiah 26:3-4 *Lord, may our leaders place their trust ultimately in You and find peace.*

“ Pray over the Scriptures. Christians just setting out on the path of prayer sometimes pray for everything they can think of, glance at their watches, and discover they have been at it for all of three or four minutes. This experience sometimes generates feelings of defeat, discouragement, even despair. A great way to begin to overcome this problem is to pray through various biblical passages.

— D.A. Carson