

## Pray for All Men [Slide 1] 1 Timothy 2:1-7

President George W. Bush expressed thanks for the prayers of his fellow Americans when he served as President. He said, “Prayer is central to the lives of countless Americans, including Laura’s and mine. We have been blessed by the prayers of millions of Americans. We could ask for no greater gift from our countrymen.” God asks us to pray for those in authority over us, to pray for their well-being, not to pray like the Russian peasant in this story. Read story. The harder we find it to pray for those in authority, the more we need to pray for them. Praying for those in authority will not only benefit us, but it will also benefit the advancement of God’s Kingdom. We’ll learn more about this in our passage today, as well as getting a glimpse of God’s heart for those who do not yet believe.

[Slide 2] I invite you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 2:1-7. 1 Timothy is about three fourths of the way through the New Testament shortly before the book of Hebrews. 1 Timothy 2:1-7. I’m going to start with verses 1-2 where Paul tells us to pray for those in authority that we might lead tranquil, peaceful lives. Read.

This passage begins with the words, “First of all then”. The word “then” lets us know that Paul is referring back to something he previously said to Timothy and most likely he is referring back to verse 18 where he exhorted Timothy to fight the good fight. For Timothy the good fight primarily referred to his responsibility to pastor well the church at Ephesus. The first instructions Paul gives to Timothy about how to carry out his responsibility have to do with how the church is to conduct itself and the first thing he mentions is prayer, specifically prayer for those in authority.

Paul uses four terms for prayer: entreaties, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings. There is probably not a lot of difference between the first three terms. In each case we are asking for something on behalf of someone else, but the fourth term is distinctive. We give thanks to God. Paul says that we should pray on behalf of all people, but then he quickly narrows his focus to those in authority. We are to pray for kings and all those in authority.

We are not only supposed to pray for those in authority but we are to thank God for them. Do you do that? We Americans have become very bad at dishonoring and disrespecting those in authority, particularly the President and those who hold national office. Our political cartoons are often grossly insulting. The things that people write on Facebook or twitter or on street signs are often vulgar, obscene, and slanderous. Those things should not characterize you and me.

President Obama stirred a lot of controversy and I’m sure that President Trump will as well and as much as we may dislike a person’s policy, their behavior, or their words, we are still called to respect and pray for those who govern us. Did you know that the Christian writers of the second and third centuries reported that prayer for rulers always formed a part of the Christian gatherings? The church began its existence under the rule of the Roman Empire and not until the time of Emperor Constantine in the fourth century were they safe from persecution. Persecution during those first three centuries was intermittent, but it was always a possibility and maybe because of that fact, the church diligently carried out God’s instructions to pray for those in authority. We should do no less.

I prayed for President Obama at least once a month for his eight years in office as well as for other national leaders. President Trump is already in my prayer journal. I also pray regularly for the Supreme Court, especially that they will overturn Roe v. Wade. Whatever you use to

organize your prayer life, whether it is a calendar, a journal, a written list, you should make sure you have government authorities written down somewhere so that you regularly pray for them. Don't forget your state and local officials. I pray that they might be saved if they are not, and that they will seek God's wisdom in making their decisions.

There is a purpose behind our praying, besides blessing those officials. That purpose is that we might live a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Wouldn't you prefer those conditions to tyranny, persecution and oppression? Under conditions of peace and tranquility we are able to pursue the work of God without hindrance. We are able to freely proclaim the Gospel without being hauled to jail. We are able to raise our families without government interference. As Americans, we have become spoiled by the blessings of freedom. We don't realize how good we have it compared to other Christians around the world or those who have lived at other times.

In 2014 LifeWay Research conducted a poll about what Christians typically pray for. Read stats. We pray more for our favorite sports teams than we do for our government leaders and then we complain about our government leaders? We can and should do better than that. Make plans to pray more for your leaders.

At this point Paul digresses from the topic of prayer to talk about God's incredible care for us demonstrated in our salvation. God is not only concerned that we experience peace and tranquility in this world but also in the world to come and that causes him in verses 4-7 to change subjects to our salvation. Paul will return to the topic of prayer in verse 8 which we will pick up next week. Let's read verses 3-7. Read.

[Slide 3] God cares for both our material and spiritual welfare. God wants us to pray so that we might enjoy peaceful and tranquil lives. He cares about our physical well-being, but he also cares about our spiritual well-being and this thought leads Paul to expound on how God cares for us spiritually.

In verse 4 Paul describes God's desire. God's desire is that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. God desires all men to be saved, but that is not ultimately what God sovereignly wills. There is a difference between what God wants and what he ultimately decides to do. Although God is all-powerful, there are some things God cannot do. He cannot violate his own nature and character. God cannot create a rock so heavy he cannot lift it, because the creation of that rock would violate his own nature as all powerful. God cannot sin or tempt anyone to sin because that would violate his holiness. God cannot force people to do right or even to be saved, because that would violate his nature of love.

For love to truly exist, there must be free choice. If no choice exists, then true love does not really exist. What you have then is a manipulated person, a robot that has been programmed to always make the right choice. For love to truly exist, there must exist the real possibility of choosing not to love. People can only love God if they are free to reject God. People are only truly good, if they have the real choice not to be good, to choose evil instead. A world where love exists, necessarily has to allow for the possibility of evil and the suffering and pain that evil brings. If God wants us to love him, which he does, then he must allow us also to hate him. He gives us real freedom and real consequences to our freedom.

This is why God can truly desire that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth and yet judge those who reject him and send them to Hell. The price of truly loving people and giving them real freedom, not the mirage of freedom, is that when they say they don't want you, then you send them to the only place where they don't have to put up with you: Hell.

The Bible is clear that God wants people to be saved and not condemned. Look at the verses I have listed on your sermon outline. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "Read." God delays the return of Jesus to

the Earth and the final reckoning so that everyone inclined to repent will repent. In Ezekiel 33:11 God says that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

The knowledge of the truth in verse 4 refers to the Gospel which Paul goes on to explain in verses 5-7. The word “for” at the beginning of verse 5 indicates that Paul is giving further explanation of the truth we need to know for salvation. We first need to know that there is only one God and only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

First there is only one God. Those religions that believe in multiple gods such as the Mormons, Hindus, and animists are wrong. There is only one God. There is no salvation in any polytheistic belief system. There is only one God also means that salvation is defined by him, not by us. Since he is the one saving us, he determines what is necessary for us to be saved, not us. We are completely dependent upon God to tell us what is necessary for our salvation.

What is necessary for our salvation? We need a mediator. A mediator comes between two parties who are in conflict and in some way uncovers or suggests a way that those two parties can be reconciled.

We were in conflict with God because of our sin. More specifically we were in rebellion. Listen to how Paul describes our reconciliation to God through Jesus in Romans 5:8-10. Read. We were sinners and enemies of God when Jesus died on the cross for us. Jesus’ death, his shed blood, provides the basis by which God can justify us, that is declare us to be righteous and fully forgive our sin. We are saved from God’s wrath, his righteous anger poured out in judgment and we are reconciled to God. Reconciliation means that our status as enemies of God has been changed to the status of friends of God, in fact to sons and daughters of God. We have not just been reconciled to be friends, we have been adopted into God’s family.

Jesus is referred to as the man, Christ Jesus, because Jesus had to become a man in order to die for us and become our mediator. Death is the separation of the spirit from the body, but a being that is all spirit like God cannot die. It was therefore necessary for Jesus to become a man in order to actually die in our place. Jesus is the perfect mediator because as God, he represents God’s interests and as man, he represents man’s interests. Also as God, Jesus brings his infinite power and nature to the cross so that his death on the cross is able to provide unlimited payment for every human being that ever lives. Judaism and Islam provide no mediator. You’re supposed to somehow be reconciled to God by your own efforts. The Christian cults provide a two bit mediator, an inferior version, an angelic being in the case of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and one of many gods in the case of Mormonism, but not the eternal, infinite God represented by Jesus, the one who is able to pay for all sin because as God he has no limits.

Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all. In those days a ransom was paid to buy people out of slavery. We were enslaved to sin. Jesus paid to set you free by dying for you. His death was the ransom payment. Paul says that he gave himself as a ransom on behalf of all. Jesus paid for the sins of everyone. Anyone can be saved who will call upon Jesus to save them. He has paid the ransom price for everyone. Here is proof that God desires everyone to be saved. He has paid the price for everyone. Paul said in Romans 6:23, “Read.” God offers everyone eternal life as a free gift. All you have to do is receive it.

I have here in my wallet a \_\_\_\_ dollar bill. I will give it as a gift to whoever wants it. Who would like this gift? [Allow someone to take the gift]. \_\_\_\_\_, now possesses the gift. Why is that? Why don’t all of you have that gift? The answer is two-fold. I’m a finite being and I can’t keep giving out the gift like God can. More importantly you did not come up here and take the gift. Salvation is a free gift from God. He offers it to everyone. He desires that everyone

take the gift. But he is not going to walk up to you and force you to take it. You have to reach out for it and take it. You do that by trusting in Jesus and asking him for the gift.

Paul's testimony is that Jesus died at the proper time in God's plan of redemption.

Besides providing a mediator and a ransom for all people, Paul's final proof that God desires all men to be saved is the fact that God chose Paul, a Jew, and charged him to proclaim the Gospel to the nations.

God wants us to pray for all people because he has provided a mediator, a ransom, and a Gospel witness for all people. God wants us to pray for those in authority so that we might enjoy the fruit of a quiet and peaceful life and so that the Gospel of reconciliation might go out unhindered. God cares both for our material well-being in this life as well as for our spiritual well-being in the life to come.

If you have never taken the gift of eternal life, I invite you to do so by trusting in Jesus and his death on your behalf. Ask him to save you and to give you eternal life. Submit to him as your God and rightful Lord.

We are going to finish by obeying what God has asked us to do. We are going to pray for our government officials. We will have an open mike time of prayer. If you would like to pray out loud for any person in authority, raise your hand and we will bring the mike to you. It's especially appropriate that we pray now with a new administration in office.