

Series: God & The Election #1835

Title: 1 Timothy 2.1-2a; 1 Thessalonians 5.16-18
What To Pray For

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. I hope you are well. If you have been with us, and I trust you have, then you know we are talking about the attitude and actions of Christians during the time of this election. Do not worry, we will not be here much longer. I think just a few more episodes and we will move on in our ongoing quest to know who God is. Having said that, this all very important and pertinent and practical. I hope that you have eyes to see and ears to hear what the Lord Jesus is saying to us from the Sermon on the Mount. And I hope you will obey the word of the Lord to *you*.

We have seen how Jesus said to love our enemies. And then to pray for those who persecute us. And last time we talked about praying for people who have governmental authority over us. This includes the president and vice-president, everyone else who holds office in the federal, state, and local governments. 1 Timothy 2, verses 1 and 2a says, **“I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority...”** And we left off asking, *how* do we do this? What is to be the content of such a prayer? I aim to answer this, and help us all to infuse our prayers with petitions for our earthly, human and temporary rulers.

First, when we make entreaties and prayers and petitions and thanksgivings for kings and all who are in authority, we should pray for our attitude in relation to our government. This goes back to the matter of loving, rather than hating our enemies. If we perceive that people in our government are our enemies (and they very well may be), then we are to love them. That does not mean we have to like them! But to love them, this requires a major change in attitude for most of us. I was in a Bible study the other day with oh around fifteen other Christians and the topic of how rats are apparently entering some homes in the city in which we live came up. Rats. The rodents. And one man, a dear brother in Christ that I love, he says, “I am not sure how the rats got out of Washington DC and came to my house, but they did!” Folks chuckled. And I get it. There was an element of jest there. But, taken together with other comments this man makes about the current administration, we all know there’s a serious statement being made, as well.

Jesus challenges this. We must carefully watch the attitude in our hearts when we take to calling human beings “rats” and, with much anger, we tear into the people in Washington. I submit to you the best way, and the first place, to receive an attitude adjustment is in prayer. Let us come before our heavenly Father, through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus and in the presence of the Holy Spirit and ask this Trinitarian God to change our hearts; to transform a heart of hate to a heart of love for our enemies. Ask that we *not* sin against the Lord and against others in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Prayer is a place to repent of our iniquities and seek Christ’s forgiveness and help.

Furthermore, pray that we will be truly changed from the inside-out. Recall again that God is sovereign over every election. His will is done. Recall that our mission is disciple-making, and pray for opportunities to share our faith with others, inviting them to come to Jesus. Pull back from over-involvement in political movements and ask for the discipline to stay in our lane, which is gospel proclamation. Wherever you pray, move into that space and first, pray for yourself. “O Lord Jesus, make me more like You. Purge me of my sinful attitudes towards governing authorities and help me to make petition for them. Amen.”

Let me give you a second way to think about this. Second, when we make entreaties and prayers and petitions and thanksgivings, we should pray that the people who serve in our government will become Christians. Let us always remember that the reason governments persecute the church is because they hate God, they reject His Son Jesus, and they are children of their father the devil. Frankly, and I will get mail on this one (and that’s OK), but I do not see how either the Democrats or the Republicans are Christian, love God, and uphold His law in our land. There is evil and godlessness on both sides and right down the middle. For example, both parties approve now of abortion, this abomination in our country. How tragic.

But, imagine what would change if prominent people in the government heard, received, and believed the gospel of Jesus Christ? Imagine if, transformed by the Holy Spirit, these men and women governed according to the Word of God? Now this would change things considerably. And before you reject this outright and think, "I am not going to pray for the redemption of the government. They're hopeless. Why waste my time praying for them to be saved?" Before you say that, get over to the Old Testament Book of Daniel and read the first four chapters. You will need the background of chapters 1-3 so that you can fully understand and appreciate what happens in chapter 4 when the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, humbled by the Living God, declares his hope in God.

If you do not believe a king, a president, a prime minister, a premier and so forth can become one of Christ's people, then you are wrong. We have Nebuchadnezzar! We will see him in heaven. Why? Because Daniel – a prophet of great prayer – petitioned God for him. And the sovereign Lord saw fit to redeem Nebuchadnezzar, a formerly very evil ruler. Set aside time to read Daniel chapters 1-4 sometime soon. You will not regret it. And what you read will challenge your mind and heart and infuse your prayers for those who have authority over us. May God have great mercy on our leaders, like He did in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar.

"O Lord, save this president and vice-president, the senators and representatives, the governors and lieutenant governors, our state senators, our mayors and legislatures. Will You bring revival among them? Will you sovereignly turn their hearts towards You? We pray they will be Jesus followers and true disciples as we are. Amen."

First, when we make entreaties and prayers and petitions and thanksgivings for kings and all who are in authority, we should pray for our attitude in relation to our government. Second, we should pray that the people who serve in our government will become Christians. Third, we should pray for Christians who are already serving in the government. Friends, there are true believers in Washington and in State Houses and municipalities across the country. Maybe some of you are even listening right now. If you know of these people by name, lift them up to God. If not by name, leave room in your petitions to ask God to infuse them with His strength and courage to obey Him as they govern.

Pray they will share the Good News of the gospel with their colleagues. Ask the Lord to protect them and their families from the Evil One. And rejoice that God always has a remnant everywhere. He has not left the American government or the government where you live without a witness to Him. Pray for these witnesses to shine for Jesus in the dark corridors of power.

And fourth, when we make entreaties and prayers and petitions and thanksgivings, for kings and all who are in authority we should, well, make thanksgivings! Do you pray with a thankful heart? When you meet with the Lord do you find that you are grateful and you express it? 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 16-18, **"Rejoice always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."** There is a lot to be discouraged about and to pour forth in intercession, *and* there is a lot to be encouraged about. What gives you joy? What are you thankful about? Tell God all about this too! Pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks.

Let me give you just one example. Thank, thank, thank God that *He is the Ruler!* We pray to the One who rules everyone and everything. Let this great truth comfort our minds and hearts. God is King of kings and He is Lord of lords. All earthly, human rulers are subject to *Him*. All are being judged by Him and will be judged by Him. No one can escape the justified judgment of God on their lives, not even men and women who have so much power and human authority now. I remind you of Proverbs 21, verse 1, **"The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes."**

Oh yes! Government authorities are in the Lord's hand. And the Lord turns them wherever the Lord wishes. Thank and praise God for this! Well, these are four ways to build content into your prayers when you petition heaven in praying for your enemies. I hope this is helpful.

Next time we are going to return to Matthew 5 and Luke 6 and talk about some of the other verses therein. I hope you will continue to be with us. In the meantime, pray! And infuse your prayers with content such as we have discussed today. If you want to talk about this, email me or send me a letter. mark@godisministry.org or God Is, PO Box 802 Winchester Massachusetts 01890. More next time on God Is!
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