

Prayer that Pleases God

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[0 : 00] Well, if you'd like to open your Bibles back to page 1193, or the verses will be on the screen for those online but also for us. And there's an outline as we continue our series through 1 Timothy.

But let me start by saying that our prayers often reveal our concerns, don't they? That is, what we are concerned about is what drives us for what to pray about, right?

So, for example, little Ginny wrote, please, God, put another holiday between Christmas and Easter. There is nothing good in there now. So clearly holidays, her concern.

I remember there used to be a three-day weekend political party, actually, that was concerned about holidays. Or this one that says, God, please give me patience because if you give me strength, I will just punch them in the face, Jack.

At least he's honest, I suppose. And clearly his concern is that he does not punch them but has patience instead, which is a good thing. The point is our prayers often reveal our concerns.

[1 : 05] And so at one level, we're to pray for all things that concern us. In fact, that's what the Bible tells us. Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation by prayer and petition.

That's the same thing. Present your requests to God. Or from 1 Peter, cast all your anxiety, whatever you're anxious about, not some of it, all of it, onto God because he cares for you.

And so at one level, all prayer pleases God. But as Christians, what should concern us most? What should prioritise our prayers, if you like?

What is it that really pleases God? Well, before we get to that, we need to remember what we saw last week since it's connected to this week. And so last week in chapter one, we saw the church is God's household and in it, truth matters.

So much so, you might remember that Timothy was to stop false teachers who seemed to say that it was only those few who followed food laws or myths or genealogies in certain families that could be saved from judgment and earn eternal life instead.

[2 : 20] But the truth is, we saw last week, that the Old Testament law was not made to save us. Even though we heard a bit of it in our first reading, you know, if you follow my righteous commands, you will live.

But the problem is no one could do it all the time, could they? And so like I said last week, when we see this law, wet paint don't touch, we immediately want to touch, don't we?

The law kind of provokes our sinful nature and shows us that we will want to break the law or sometimes do break the law. In other words, it shows us that we're sinners who need a savior.

And we kind of know that ourselves, don't we, if we're honest? I mean, we all know we've sometimes thought or said or done things we shouldn't have done, me included.

And we've all sometimes failed to treat God as, well, God. In other words, we are all sinners, and so we will all face judgment.

[3 : 24] But Paul then went on last week to talk about the truth, the gospel truth, using his own life as an example. And remember, he said, well, actually, the grace of our Lord Jesus was poured out on me abundantly.

And God's grace actually gave God's son, Christ Jesus, who came into the world in the middle of the passage to save sinners of whom he says he is the worst.

And so he was, verse 16, shown mercy as an example for those who would believe in Jesus and receive eternal life.

And so it's not just a select few who follow food laws or myths or certain families. No, no, it's all who believe in Jesus will be saved from judgment for life eternal.

And so, therefore, we're to pray for all. Point one, verse one. This will be our longest point, but have a look at verse one. He goes on to say, Notice the priority that Paul puts on this prayer.

[4 : 36] He uses words like urge, first of all. And then he kind of heaps up synonyms for prayer, you know, petitions, prayers, intercessions. They all mean the same thing.

But he kind of bangs on about it to emphasize the importance of it. But pray what? You know, that people would be nicer or better drivers or whatever bugs you these days.

No, no. Pray that all people would believe and be saved. And we know that because of the third word in that verse. The third word is then or therefore.

And this is where this week is connected to last week. As I just said, Paul has pointed out that if he, the worst of sinners, can be saved, then anyone can be saved.

No one is beyond saving. Anyone can believe in Jesus and be saved if they want to. And so since all people can believe and be saved, verse one, then pray for all people to be saved.

[5 : 42] That's the connection. That's the logic. Now, obviously, we can't pray for every person in the world by name. We don't have the time and all know their names for that matter. But we can pray for people groups around the world, for example.

Perhaps where our mission partners are working. And we can pray for those we do know by name, can't we? And so do we. Pray for parts of the world like uni campuses where AFES workers are or Spain where Lauren Rater is or Timor where the deans are.

And do we pray for those we know, even if they're anti-Christian? Sometimes I'm tempted not to pray for certain people because I, you know, think they'll never believe.

Oh, that Jeff, no chance. He's never going to believe. I'm not going to bother with Jeff. Do you ever do that kind of thing? But if Paul, the worst of sinners, can be saved, then anyone can be, can't they?

And so pray for all people, including, verse 2, those in authority. For kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

[6 : 53] Now, I take it we're to pray for the salvation of those in authority since they are part of all people, right? And so pray for Putin to be saved.

Pray for Trump to become an actual Christian. I mean, can you imagine the difference to our world that would make if they are saved? But there's another way we're to pray for our governments.

We're to pray that they would govern well so that, verse 2, we can live a quiet and peaceful life, or so peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

But what does that mean? Does that mean a comfortable middle class life? Even though, well, no, it doesn't mean that, even though I sometimes find myself praying that.

Have you done that as well? You know, we want a certain government to be elected yesterday because we like those certain policies which will make my life comfortable. You know, so if you're a baby boomer, govern in a way that protects your super.

[7 : 53] If you're a homeowner, govern in a way that forces the banks to lower their interest rates. Or if you're a uni graduate or student, govern in a way that decreases the interest on your HECS debt or whatever.

We often pray for our government to govern well so that our lives will be more comfortable, don't we? But that's not what Paul means here. Rather, he means to live a life that promotes the gospel and wins respect from outsiders.

You see, the false teachers were promoting controversy and quarrels. And so they gave the gospel a bad name to the outsiders around them.

But we're to live peaceful and godly lives that give the gospel a good name, that promotes the gospel and wins respect so that people might be willing to talk to us and listen to us about Jesus.

We see this in chapter 6, for example, where Paul says to those who have masters to consider them worthy of full respect so that God's name and our gospel teaching may not be slandered like the false teachers are doing.

[9 : 03] And in the other pastoral epistle, Titus, he talks about not stealing but being fully trusted so that in every way they will make the teaching about God, our Savior, attractive to those outside the church.

Or in 1 Thessalonians, where Paul uses that same phrase of a quiet life, he says to do a quiet life so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders.

That's why. Of course, it's assumed in all those verses that people will know at some point that we're Christians. Otherwise, they'll just think we've been taught good manners by our mothers, right?

And I hope we have too, but we're to live godly lives that promote the gospel and win respect so that people might talk to us and we can talk to them and they might listen to us about Jesus. And so be saved. You see, what's the best advertisement for the gospel? Christians who actually live it. What's the worst advertisement for the gospel?

[10:09] Christians who don't, who are hypocrites, right? In January this year, a few months ago, there was a YouTube interview podcast between Joe Rogan, who's on the right.

He is a commentator for the UFC fighting scene in the US. Most of you in this room will not know him, although the handful of young people I can see have probably heard of him.

And Wes Huff, who's a Christian historian on the left. The video was viewed over 3.4 million times. And the comments that came up on the stream afterwards included things like this.

And one person said, I'm not a Christian, but I do appreciate the historicity of Christianity. And I find Wes to be an excellent representative of his faith.

Great episode. Thanks, Joe and Wes. Another, I'm not even Christian nor religious, yet I've never anticipated an episode more than this. Wes, you are a true gentleman and scholar.

[11:06] Thank you for showing that we can still kill with kindness. Notice how both comments pointed out, not just the historical evidence we have for Jesus, but the behavior of Wes, who follows Jesus.

In fact, I think it was because of Wes's behavior that people actually listened to him. Or like one of our members at the 1030 congregation, who was at a work induction recently.

And they were asked to share a couple of things that were important to them as a way of getting to know each other and building team camaraderie. And so he included being a Christian because of what Jesus had done for him.

And I know he works hard at being a godly example at work so that people might listen to him. And he did. He had a couple of conversations afterwards. The point is, we're to pray for our government, not only that they might be saved, but also that they'd govern well for people's good, all people's good, yes.

And for our freedom to live openly godly lives that promote the gospel with respect. So people might talk to us and listen to us about Jesus.

[12:19] Perhaps even accept an invitation from us for our Hope 25 services. Of course, we're still to live godly lives when the government doesn't govern well too, by the way.

It's just harder to be open about it. I think we've already started to feel that in our country. But certainly those in China find it harder, don't they? And so do we pray for the government and for this reason?

That we can live openly godly lives that might lead people to salvation? Or do we just pray for the government so that we can live comfy lives that lead to our relaxation?

Well, to encourage us to pray for all people, Paul now gives us two big reasons, starting with God who desires the salvation of all people. So point to verse 3 and 4.

He says, Verse 3, The word this refers to the prayers of verse 1 and 2.

[13:28] Prayers for all people to be saved, including for our government, so that we can live godly lives that might lead to others being saved. These prayers are good.

Because they're for people's good, but also because they please God. Why? Well, because, verse 4, He wants, desires all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

As we heard in our first reading, A God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but He rather, or is He not pleased, when they turn from their ways and live?

And Paul highlights God's desire, in fact, in our passage by calling God our Saviour. And, of course, the way to be saved, verse 4, is by coming to a knowledge of the truth. That is the truth of the gospel, the good news about Jesus.

So here's God's concern for all people, that they might hear the truth of the gospel, believe and be saved. And if this is God's concern, what He wants for all people, then ought it not be our concern too?

[14:41] Such that it drives our prayers for all people. We're to pray for all because God desires the salvation of all, so much so that He gave His Son Jesus to die as a ransom for all.

So, point 3, verse 5 and 6. He goes, For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all people.

This is now being witnessed to at the proper time. Here Paul begins by saying there is one God over all. Yes, people believe in all sorts of gods in our world, don't they?

But just because they do, it doesn't make it so. People's perceptions don't change reality, even though they sometimes try. I mean, your perceptions of being able to fly will not change the reality when you jump off the roof and fall to the ground, right?

Right? Perceptions don't change the truth. And so their perceptions of who is God doesn't change the truth. There's actually only one true God.

[15:51] And since He is one true God, then He is God over all, whether they realize it or not, whether they voted Labor or Liberal, whether they're male or female, whether they're Ukrainian, Russian or Australian.

There is one God over all. And therefore, we all will have to answer to Him, which doesn't bode well for us.

Because as I said before, we've all sinned against Him, not always treated Him as the one true God. But because He loves us, He's provided for us, the one mediator to put things right between us and Him.

Christ Jesus, it says. Where Christ, as you know, is a title for King. And so this King Jesus is the one mediator. And not only because He's the only one who is both God and man, so He can perfectly stand between God and mankind, as it says, but because, verse 6, He's the only one who gave His life as a ransom for all people.

A ransom is the price you pay to purchase someone's freedom. Like in 1193, when King Richard I, known as Richard the Lionheart, was returning from the misguided crusades, but he was captured by Leopold V of Austria, who demanded a ransom for Richard's release.

[17:20] And the price? 150,000 marks, which is equal to three tons worth of silver. Can you imagine three tons of silver? That's a pretty big ransom price, right?

But apparently the people of England so loved their king, they paid extra taxes. Many of the nobles donated their fortunes. And after many months, enough money, I'm not sure it was the full amount, but enough money was raised and Richard was released.

Apparently that's, or this is where the expression, a king's ransom comes from, this event in history. Well, in our passage, here is our king's ransom.

And it's not silver, it's his own life, isn't it? King Jesus gave his life as the ransom price for our sin, so that we can be set free from judgment.

And because his life as God's son is of such infinite worth, then it can pay the price for all people's sins.

[18:20] So all people can be saved, can be set free from judgment, if they believe in him. For it's only by believing in Jesus that his ransom becomes effective for us.

And so by way of application, if you're here today, or you're listening online, do you believe in Jesus? That has his blood become your ransom to set you free with the guarantee of life eternal. In fact, so that you can be right with God now, with help and hope in this life, and the guarantee of a perfect life later.

And for us who have believed, then the application is what we've already seen, actually. It's firstly, do we prioritize prayer for all people to be saved? Yes, we can pray for all things that concern us, and we should, but do we prioritize this prayer?

Even for those impossible people we think will never believe. For it's this prayer that pleases God. I mean, the big picture of the passage is pray for all people, because God wants all people to be saved, and Christ gave himself as a ransom for all people.

[19:40] Do you see the repetition there? And in case we still haven't got it, Paul adds in verse 7, that he was appointed by God to be a herald or preacher, to teach the gospel, not just to the Jews, but the end of verse 7, to the Gentiles, who were all the other people in the world.

It's all people again. And so if God's nature is saviour, if God's desire is to save all, if there's one God over all, one mediator for all, and if Jesus died as a ransom for all, then how can we not prioritize praying for all?

After all, it's God's concern, which should be our concern, shouldn't it? And Christ's blood has already been shed, so let's make the most of it, by praying for all people.

Let's not waste a drop of it. So when you get on the bus, or the train, or look out the window at work tomorrow, or go to the shops tomorrow, and you see all these people, why don't you pause for 10 seconds, and shoot up a prayer, that some of them might be saved?

Or pray for people, in your suburb, or street, or the people groups, where our mission partners, are working to be saved. Our monthly prayer night, is Wednesday night, and we'll be doing that.

[21 : 05] Or when you pray for things each day, why don't you add a prayer, one prayer, for someone's salvation, each day, amidst, you know, your health concerns, your financial concerns, your family concerns, whatever else is right to pray as well.

Or perhaps, pick two to three people you know, whether family, friends, colleagues, or neighbours, who are not yet Christians, perhaps make one of them, someone you think will never believe, and pray for them each week, to perhaps, come to our Hope 25 service, or hear the gospel some other way, I don't care how they hear the gospel, we just want to help them hear it, believe, and be saved. This is prayer that pleases God. And the second application, is as we saw, do we pray for governments, to govern well, so that we can live openly, godly lives, that might lead people, to being saved.

And so pray for our new Prime Minister, pray that Anthony Albanese, might be saved. But pray also, that he might govern well, for the good of all, and for our freedom, to live those openly, godly lives, that our lives, might be one stepping stone, along the path, to people being saved.

And third, make sure we then, live those openly, godly lives. Let's make sure, we're good advertisements, for the gospel, not bad ones.

[22 : 31] so that people, might talk to us, and listen to us, about Jesus, and be saved. Prayer for all, because God desires, the salvation of all, so much so, Jesus died for all.

And so, why don't you start, praying now? I'm going to give you, a couple of minutes, I said you pray, I'm going to give you, a moment of quiet, to think of two, to three people, that you know, perhaps one, you think will never believe, and pray, that God might enable them, to hear the gospel, believe, and be saved.

And then I'll close. Let's put this, into practice right now. So let's have a moment, of quiet for you, to think and pray, and then I'll close. Thank you.

Let me close.

Gracious God, we thank you, that you want all people, to be saved. So much so, that you gave Jesus, to die as a ransom, for all people, so they can be saved.

[24 : 19] And so help us, to be prayerful, for all. And to indeed, have mercy on those people, we've just named. We ask it all, in Jesus name. Amen.