

Prayer For All People

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[0 : 00] Well, if we turn now, please, to 1 Timothy and chapter 2, looking at the first eight verses or so, or first few verses there.

We can read just from the beginning. 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 peaceable and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Well, it hardly needs to be said that prayer is one of the great essentials of the Christian life, and it is so much emphasized in Scripture that you can't possibly miss that emphasis all the way through the words of the Bible.

And it's essential, not only on a personal level, as we come to think of our own development as Christians, it's also essential in terms of our relationship to other people.

[1 : 16] It's essential, too, as we'll see from this passage, for the world in which we live and for specific reasons that Paul is mentioning here as to why he says that we are to pray for all people.

And he especially mentions kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a peaceable and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

And you can see from that that he is concerned not just to emphasize our own individual lives as lives that will be dignified and godly, but also he is concerned to emphasize that the context of the world in which we live is one to pray for, so that that will prove, by God's blessing, to be a vehicle for further increase in our own development and godliness and a life that's dignified in every way.

So the first point, really, from the passage is that prayers are to be made for all people. As he says, what he urges, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people. He doesn't make any distinction between different types, different levels, different backgrounds, and although he comes to focus in on kings and those who are in authority, he does actually emphasize right to begin with that prayers are to be made for all people.

[2 : 45] And as far as possible, that's what we seek to follow out in our lives privately in prayer and even public prayer as well, which is why we have, as was mentioned in prayer tonight, the great privilege of bringing things before God on behalf of one another and others that are not present with such gatherings as we involve ourselves in.

Now it's interesting that Paul is here actually dissecting prayer so that we can see these four particular parts of prayer and how each of these is important in its own right for ourselves to understand something more about what prayer is, but also in terms of the context here that he's praying for the advance of the gospel especially and for people through that to be saved, what he's saying is, this is what I urge, that these four elements of prayer, as we use the word prayer generally, actually be made for all people.

And if you go through them briefly, we can just see something of what he says here in these words. First of all, supplications. That while it's got an emphasis on being a suppliant, being someone who really comes before God and sets out with urgency, with earnestness, those things for which you're praying, it is a specific kind of prayer that's mentioned.

There's a prayer that gives attention to specific needs and doesn't just be content with generalities. And that's itself such an important point. Although we have to be careful, especially in prayer in public, careful in the sense that we don't hurt people, that we don't bring things into prayer that are not appropriate in a public context.

Nevertheless, it is also important that we supplicate, that we actually detail the prayers. And indeed, there was an example of that, of course, this evening when those who are praying and yourselves, I'm sure, quietly praying for specific individuals, for specific needs, supplicating the Lord, bringing before him these particular needs, these detailed needs, these definite needs that he gives us the facility to know about and so to set out in his presence.

[4 : 59] Well, here he is saying, I urge that supplications be made for all people. That's why it's important for us to keep abreast of what's happening in our world, what's happening in our own locality, what's happening in the political world, what's happening in the world of the media, of entertainment, of all sorts of parts of society, so that we can actually bring our supplications before God.

The more we come to be informed, and we have no excuse because we have all these mechanisms, all these means by which we can inform our minds about the world we live in and how people live in this world, and that's so that we can bring our supplications to God.

Now, prayers, the next word is more general, but nevertheless, it deals with more constant needs, if you like, because there are always needs that remain with us all the time.

While supplications can pick up things which maybe happen from time to time, and you can home in on that more specifically and in more detail, there are always things that are with us all the time as individuals and with the world in which we live, our general spiritual needs and moral needs and those of our society.

You can always bring that to God. You know that every single day it's relevant and important to bring all of that to God, to have it in prayer in a more general and yet remembering sort of way.

[6 : 31] Now, intercession is the third one. Well, you know what intercession really is about, and it's a word that's used, of course, about Jesus himself. And when you look at the intercession of Jesus in the Bible that he makes for others, that's exactly what the intercession, the word intercession really means.

You're interceding. You're coming to present the needs of other people and pray specifically for them before God. You are actually in intercession, in a sense, putting yourself where they are in order to present their needs to God along with your own.

And that's, again, why it's important to have proper and specific and ongoing information about people, about not just situations, but the people in those situations.

Because it's so important that we have a sense of fellow feeling of sympathy with those that we live with. And in the hurried world of today, the danger for myself and yourselves as Christians as well is that we fall into that same sort of habit of the world where you don't really give much attention to things except in a fleeting way.

You hear about it. If you move on to something else very quickly, the attention span mainly of the world is so short. Give people something to tell them to read for 20 minutes.

[7 : 54] Well, obviously, many people don't read anyway, but even if they did, wouldn't spend 20 minutes doing. Same with even with video, whether it's an informative video, whatever. It's very rare, especially for younger folks today, to be able to concentrate wholly without stop on a video that lasts more than 5 to 10 minutes, unless it's some sort of favorite cartoon or program or whatever, which is fine in its own right.

But the point of making is that as we come to intercessions, what we're trying to do in praying for people is just to imagine ourselves in their position.

Try and actually put yourself where they are. Just stop and dwell upon their situation as is made known to you. Think of what it would be like for yourself to be in that situation.

Try and think through what that would mean for you, what your specific needs would be. And then you can come before the Lord and say, well, Lord, I bring before you such and such in such and such a situation.

And that way we pray more meaningfully and with more tenderness probably, and certainly with more patience to wait and bring before the Lord these specific needs in that way to make intercession.

[9 : 05] Well, the Christ intercession, he obviously knows what our situation is like. He's been through it himself. But that's why in the Bible, in Hebrews 4, for example, we are counseled there because we have such a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Let us come before the throne of grace that we may receive from him. In other words, he is there interceding for us as we present our needs to him.

He has put himself in our place already. And he knows from that position what it's like, what we ourselves are going through. He knows that exactly. What a great bonus.

What a boon that is. As you come before God and know that the Lord, sitting on the throne of heaven, not only knows about you in his omniscience and in all that he knows about you as God, but he has been where you are as a human being.

As we'll see in a minute, that's why one of the reasons he's described here as the man, Christ Jesus. All of this is to encourage Timothy and those that Timothy will minister to, to engage in these prayers, these supplications, prayers and tocessions.

[10:18] And then he moves on to thanksgivings. Now, he doesn't leave out the for all people when you come to thanksgivings. And in some cases, it's relatively easy to give thanks and to give thanks for certain people and for certain situations.

But what he's saying here, give thanks for all people, for kings and for all who are in high positions. It's not so easy for a Christian in North Korea to pray for their political leader or for places where the gospel is treated with violence, where Christians are treated with violence, where the great danger exists in living your life as a Christian, where much persecution goes on from day to day.

How do you pray for those in authority in those circumstances? And, well, it's not so difficult to pray for them and pray for their conversions.

But with thanksgivings, that's not so easy, is it? But if it's something that brings us to God in prayer, if it's something that, even if it's somebody who's in charge of a country that's absolutely ruthless and seeking to put down the Christian faith and the church, that is bringing all of these persecuted Christians closer to the Lord.

And you'll find out that some, not all of them, or most of them at least, are giving thanks to God for that. By the grace that God gives them, they are able to say to the Lord that they're thankful at least that they can bring this in their own hearts and in their own prayers to God, without which perhaps they wouldn't be as ready or as keen to come as near and spend time in the presence of God as that.

[12:15] Well, there are supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings. And he's saying, I urge that this be made for all peoples.

And we do have to bear in mind, of course, that he is focusing on kings and all who are in high positions. That's the second thing, that prayers are to be made for all people for two good reasons. Two good reasons being for peace and quiet, and secondly, for people to be saved. He's saying we are to do this for kings and all who are in high positions.

And then you realize that he's focusing on them, not to neglect of those who are under them, of course, but he's focusing on them because he knows that those who are in government control the affairs of a country by and large.

And that depending on what they're like, what their outlook is, what their policies are, how they view those under them, it is either conducive or otherwise to the promotion of peace and dignity and well-being for all people.

[13:22] That's what he's got in mind. We have to pray for kings and all who are in high positions. And when we pray for our government, as we seek to do frequently and in an ongoing way, we pray for governments, for the queen, for those in such places of authority, whether it's the forces of law and order, our judiciary and the courts, dealing with such important matters from day to day.

All of those great issues in our nation have always been for Christians something over which they pray before God. Why? So that the framework of the country will be conducive to the advance of the gospel.

So that there will be that peace and quiet that will actually favor the gospel. So that it will be, as he puts it here, pleasing in the sight of God. This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God because God likes and God loves peace and love and those sort of conditions that promote his cause.

Not hatred, violence, dissension, disputes. All of the things that so mark us as a people and this generation is no less than another guilty of all of that.

You remember Jeremiah when God spoke to him about what was going to happen to the people where they were going to be taken in captivity to Babylon. And Jeremiah 29 verse 7 mentioning the place to which they were going to be brought.

[14 : 53] Pray, he says, for the well-being of that place. Jeremiah's life wasn't easy but he wouldn't have found this easy either to pray in that way for Babylon who was going to devastate the forces of the Babylonians, going to devastate his nation and actually going to bring such ruin upon the temple and upon the worship and the cause of God in Jerusalem and so on.

Well, in verse 7 of Jeremiah 29, this is what the Lord was saying, To all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their produce, take wives and have sons and daughters, take wives for your sons, give your daughters in marriage that they may bear sons and daughters, multiply there and do not decrease.

But seek the welfare or the well-being of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

In other words, he's saying in its well-being as you pray for the well-being of Babylon. Of course, Jeremiah and the other exiles who were believers would have brought that before God so that God would be merciful and turn the Babylonians and bring them to himself and all of that would come into it.

But especially he was concerned with praying for their welfare, for the peace of Babylon, for in their peace you will have peace. And God will have us to pray for peace and quiet and peace and well-being in our nation, in our own context as well.

[16 : 42] So that we may live, he says, a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. And of course there he is focusing on Christians, focusing on the church of God, so that they will actually come to live this particular kind of life to which God has saved them.

Godly and dignified, Christ-like in every way. This is what we are to pray for. This is why we are to pray for it, so that God will actually bring those conditions about to further the gospel and salvation of people.

And that's what the second point is, not just for peace and quiet, but the outcome of that is to have people saved. He says, this is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

That follows on from or grows out of the emphasis on having the conditions of peace and of quiet and of well-being, something we're far removed from as a nation, certainly as a society.

But nevertheless, this is his focus. Where is his good? So in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved.

[18 : 04] In other words, who will create, by this blessing in response to prayer, create that condition favorable to the advance of the gospel, to the mission of the church, to the conversion of sinners.

Because we know that strife is not pleasing to God, whether it's within his church or amongst human beings in general. It's not something that's in any way pleasing to God, because this really is the focus of God, people to be saved.

And that's why the description is here, God our Saviour. This is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour. His focus is on God saving sinners.

That's as he's followed on from chapter 1, the coming of Christ into the world, where he specifically mentions there in verse 15, he came into the world to save sinners, as if that was really the only reason he came, and it is the primary reason.

Now he's saying, I urge first of all, he's making this a matter of priority, of first importance, this prayer for this reason and to this end, that we pray so that it will be pleasing.

[19 : 17] In the sight of God our Saviour, this quiet, godly, dignified life, that we may have these peaceable conditions, so that people will be saved.

Now of course that doesn't mean God doesn't save people when there are conditions very different to that. Thankfully God saves people even in the midst of war and strife and terror and everything else.

And he can use these terrible conditions to bring people to know himself. But for Paul, his main emphasis is on peaceable lives, on peaceable conditions, because that suits the Gospel, and it suits the message of the Gospel, and it promotes the values of the Gospel.

And so you can see how he's saying here, God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now we haven't got time to go into any of the deeper theological issues there, but you can see immediately that there is something of a theological conundrum there, because why is he saying,

this God who desires all people to be saved, and I can just hear you in your mind saying, but not all people will be saved.

[20 : 36] So how then can God desire that all people will be saved, when on the other hand, God himself knows, God himself has not decreed that all people will be saved.

And the context here, while that's a question for theology certainly, and it's something that theologians have wrestled with down through the years, the context here really seems to make it clear that all people here, of course, don't mean all individuals.

That would contradict other parts of the Bible, and make it clear, not every individual, not every person is actually going to be saved. The all people, he's talking here about all kinds of people, those kings and high positions, and all people in the society that Timothy is going to be ministering in.

It doesn't matter what kind of people they are, where they've come from, what their background is, who they belong to, all people, all kinds of human beings. We use the word races, although strictly speaking, there's only one race, the human race, but in racial terms, there are different backgrounds, different kinds of backgrounds, and skin colors, and so on.

And what Paul is emphasizing is, God's concern is that all kinds of people will be saved, because the saved are not all drawn from people with white faces and fair hair, or black hair.

[22 : 06] They're from all parts of the world, from the four corners of the earth, as the psalmist puts it, from north, south, east, and west. They will come into this path that leads heavenwards.

And heaven is going to be a place of great variety, wonderful variety. There will be nothing boring about heaven, nothing at all of what we tend to associate with the things of this world that make it tedious for us.

nothing of that. It's all such variety of backgrounds, and races, and peoples, and languages, and tongues, standing before God, and before the throne, as we read at some of the funeral services this week already, Revelation chapter 5.

This is what John actually was given to see, remember, standing before God, this great picture of heaven, a number that more, great number, that no one could number, from every nation, all tribes, and peoples, and languages, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb.

And universally, they're all clothed in the same kind of garments, white robes, and they all have palm branches in their hands. They have purity, and victory, to actually characterize them in heaven.

[23 : 21] That's what these emblems stand for. It's symbolical of, the white robes, symbolical of purity, perfect purity, and the palm branches are symbols of victory, victory over sin, and over death.

That's where they are. That's what heaven is. But all of these people have come, from very, very different conditions and backgrounds, to share in that same life that God, through Christ, gives to his people.

This is what we pray for. That all people will be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth. And of course, that too is important, and especially important in the age that we live in, because Paul is equating here, to be saved, with coming to the knowledge of the truth.

For Paul, there is but one truth, the truth that is in Christ, the truth that God has revealed in the scriptures, and in his Son, in Jesus Christ, and the work of Christ. That is the truth.

And salvation is coming, to the knowledge of the truth, not just a head knowledge, but coming to assimilate, the truth of the Bible, into your very soul, into your life. Making it foundational, making it, that which really shapes, your thinking, and your outlook, and your hopes, and your aspirations.

[24 : 36] nations. Because God, desires all people to be saved, and come to the knowledge, of the truth. That is not what burdens us, in evangelism.

whether we are, in a context, surrounded by Islam, as many nations are, where many Christians are, in those nations. Or whether we are simply thinking of, our own situation, where the majority of people, even if they are not converted Christians, nevertheless, base their lives, at least loosely, on a Christian basis, and a Christian outlook.

And yet, there are people, of course, in our own context, who follow other beliefs, or no beliefs at all, other than a secularist way, of looking at life.

Well, God will have all people, to be saved, to be delivered, from these kinds, of philosophies, and these kinds, of ideologies. Instead of that, that they will come, to know the truth, to the knowledge,

of the truth, to be saved, in Christ.

And that's then, moving on to, for there is one God, and there is one mediator, between God, and men, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself, a ransom for all.

[25 : 58] Again, he's mentioning, there is no basis, for salvation, for all, except in Christ Jesus. And the basis, for salvation, that's in Christ, is absolutely, suitable, and complete, for the all, that he's mentioning here.

He will have all people, he desires all people, to be saved, whatever background, or kind of, person they have been, or where they've come from, because there's only, one mediator, between God, and men, between God, and human beings, and he himself, gave himself, a ransom, for all.

In other words, the ransom, that is in Jesus, is not just a ransom, for people, brought up in this country, or in the USA, or wherever, is for all people. There is no other way, but the way, that Jesus himself is, as the way, the truth, and the life.

And that's what we, hold out in the gospel, that, whatever other ways, are commended, by human beings, in their own philosophies, these are at odds, with God's way.

And people need to be, redeemed from that. Redeemed from, all that is not, of the truth. That's why he says, he gave himself, a ransom, for all, which is the testimony, given at the proper, time, that was proclaimed, in the gospel.

[27 : 21] But you notice, he talks here about, Jesus being, the mediator. There is one God, and one mediator, between God, and men. A mediator, as you know, is, somebody who acts, between, parties that are disengaged, whether it's individuals, or groups, whatever.

Mediator is somebody, who stands, as it were, between them, especially when they're in dispute, usually has some kind of dispute, and a mediator is called in, to try and actually, bring about a resolution, to that dispute, that's between those two individuals, or two parties.

And to do that, the mediator has to, actually, equally represent, both sides. Mediator cannot be biased. It cannot, it cannot actually, or she cannot, come and say, well, I much prefer the views, of that side, so I'm really going to just, make it clear, that that's what I believe, that that's what I believe, should be agreed upon, and he can't then, convey that, to the other side.

That's not mediating, that's just being, that's just being biased. Whatever his own personal views are, her own personal views are, he must equally represent, both sides.

And that's what Jesus, has done, and is doing. There is no, mediatorship like Jesus. In fact, in the Old Testament, you'll find, back in Exodus chapter 20, and verses 18, to 20, a type of Christ, or the symbolism, as it's found there, in Moses, as he actually brings, before God, the needs of the people.

[29 : 04] Exodus chapter 20, and verses 18, to 20, you find, the people there, terrified, when they saw the thunder, and flashes of lightning, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mountains smoking, the people were afraid, and trembled, and they stood far off, and said to Moses, you speak to us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.

Moses said, don't be afraid, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him, may be in you. The people stood far off, while Moses drew near, to the thick darkness, where God was.

He went up, for the people, to God. But then when he came back down, he spoke from God, to the people. And then later on, in Exodus, where you find, the reference to the golden calf, that was made, in chapter 32, you'll find again, that Moses comes to be a representative, of the people.

Because God said to him, go down for your people, have corrupted themselves, they have turned quickly aside, out of the way that I command them, and they have said to this calf, these are your gods of wisdom.

And the Lord said to Moses, now therefore, let me alone. See, there's a lot in that, isn't there? God is saying to, to Moses, as somebody who wrestles with him, in prayer, now let me alone, that my wrath, may burn hot, against them, and that I may consume them, in order that I, that I may make, a great nation of you.

[30 : 42] I would take, great grace, and a great man of grace, not to actually yield, to that temptation, because it really was, a very real temptation, to Moses, where God himself, was actually saying to him, I'm going to make, an end of these people, but I can make, a new start with you.

So don't hold on, to me anymore, on their behalf, don't pray to me, about them, don't intercede for them, is what he means. But you see, Moses implored the Lord, and said, Lord, why does your

wrath, wax hot against your people, whom you have brought out, of the land of Egypt? Why should the Egyptians say, with evil intent, did he bring them out? Turn from your burning anger, relent from this disaster, against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants.

Then he says, where he went on, to continue that way, before God, for the people's sake, and saying to God, if there needs to be, a retribution, or death, then take it out on me.

That's, Moses has, a mediator, between God, and the people. He's representing, the people fully, without, actually losing, the interests of God, in the future, of his covenant.

[32 : 06] And when Jesus, is the mediator, of his people, which is what, Paul is saying here, there is one God, one mediator, between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

You see now, why he's calling him, the man Christ Jesus. Because he needs to be, as fully human, as those he mediates for. He needs to be, as fully human, as those he came to save.

And that's what he is. When Jesus, when Jesus, when Jesus, when Jesus, when Jesus, intercedes for his people, as human beings, he took, and he continues to take, their side, completely.

When you think of all, their needs, he brings that, before God. But on the other hand, he brings all, the demands, and requirements, of God, to meet together, in himself.

He fully represents, God. He fully represents, the people he came to save. And he has that, in his own person, as the mediator, that no one else is.

[33 : 12] And that's why, Paul is emphasizing, this is the one mediator, between this one God, and men, and human beings. The man, Christ, Jesus.

Again, we're back to, the knowledge, that Christ has, of us, from his humanity's, perspective. And that he is, while fully God, and representing God, towards us.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, he is fully man, fully human, and representing us, before God.

What a great, savior you have. what wonderful, greatness, and depth, there is to his person, in the fact, that he is both, these at once, God, and man.

In the fact, that he represents, both sides, equally, and fully, without prejudice, on the one side, or the other, to the imbalance, to one side, or the other.

But that is, who he is. And it is he, who is, the means, through which, people are saved. Through his mediation, through his being, the mediator, which is why, we pray as we do.

[34 : 30] So then, there we have, in summary, and very briefly, that prayers, are to be made, for all people. Prayers, are to be made, for all people, for two very good reasons.

That we will live, peaceable, and quiet lives. But then, so that that also, will facilitate, the gospel, for people, to be saved. And thirdly, the one God, and the one mediator, is for all people, that are mentioned, in these two, other senses there.

The one God, and the one man, Christ Jesus, together, in his person, as our mediator, for all time. May God bless, these thoughts, to us again, this evening.

We're going to conclude, now singing, in Psalm 66, Psalm 66, on page 84, and from verse 14, we'll sing, to the end of the psalm, I'll keep the vows, I made, when trouble came my way, rams, bulls, and goats, I'll sacrifice, and on your altar lay.

Come, all who fear God, who fear our God, I'll tell what he has done. I cried out to him, with my mouth, his praise, was on my tongue.

[35 : 50] And so on, to the end of the psalm, I'll keep the vows, I made. I'll keep the vows, I made, when trouble, came my way, round spools, and doors, I'll sacrifice, and on your altar lay.

Come, all who fear our God, I'll tell what he has done.

I cried out to him, with my mouth, his praise was on my tongue.

If I had cherished sin, the Lord would not have heard, God bless you, God bless you, my word.

Forever God be praised, who hears me from above.

[37 : 42] He has not turned away, my prayer, forget from me his love.

So that you I