

How to pray for those in authority.

Readings

Romans 13:1-7 p1140

1 Timothy 2:1-6 p1192

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The Setting

- Less than a decade prior to Paul writing to the church in Rome, Emperor Claudius had implemented a mass expulsion of Jews from the city, which had resulted in great suffering for these displaced people.
- It was now only three years since the death of Claudius and the return of many of those Jews.

2



- When Paul writes to Timothy in Ephesus a few years later, the dark clouds of persecution were once again gathering over the church.
- Spreading rapidly out of Rome, Nero's hatred of Christians was biting and Paul was well aware that far more difficult times than had previously been known were in store for the church.

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- Key principles that come out of our readings that will help us to pray for those in authority.
- Getting the right perspective...

4

...on the Role of God

- "...*there is no authority except that which God has established*" (Rom 13v1).
- The politicians may not acknowledge it but the confidence we have in praying for them is that of the Sovereignty of God.
- The Psalmist is clear on this in **Psalm 2:1-6** p543.

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- The Greek word for 'authority' in the middle of Romans 13:1 actually means 'delegated' authority.
- It was a political term applied to a Roman Governor who ruled in place of the Emperor and by his authority. A New Testament example of this would be Pontius Pilate.
- So God delegates this civil authority as indeed Jesus points out to the aforementioned Pilate in **John 19:11** p1087.

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- It is an important principle that the authority of the state is delegated, and therefore is not absolute power.
- God remains sovereign, even when the state does not acknowledge Him **Daniel 4:34b-35** p889
- We see the first problem where government doesn't work as it should; i.e. a failure to recognise where their authority comes from.
- "...when the supremacy of God is recognised, every subordinate relationship is transformed and the performance of every duty is made noble." (Wilson). 7

- ...on the Role of Authorities**
- Paul shows the Christians in Rome that the chief role of authorities is to maintain law and order (Rom 13v3-5).
 - They are to meet the needs of a situation created by sin until Christ comes and evil is finally punished and righteousness rewarded.
 - The reference in Romans 13:4 to 'bearing the sword' is a metaphor used to demonstrate the punishing of the wrongdoer. It was the symbol of a Roman magistrate's power to judge.
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- Government is much more than law and order but the principle is there.
 - Human government has been entrusted by God and therefore it follows that it is God who sets the parameters within which this can and must be exercised.
 - The state can only command obedience within the limits of the purposes for which it has been divinely instituted **Acts 5:29** p1097.
 - God is still sovereign; ultimately we are all answerable to Him.
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- Paul instructs Timothy to pray that the authorities might achieve conditions of peace and security so that they (the Christians) could pursue their lives in a godly way and in a way set apart for God (v2).
 - This is done through the passing of good and just laws and wise government.
 - If we are to live peaceful lives in godliness and holiness we need righteous government and righteous laws that produce the environment for such a life.
 - When that is the case there are benefits to the whole nation and further afield.
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- In the next two verses (3-4) there is a further benefit to such a political environment.
 - It is good, it pleases God...why? Because he wants men to be saved.
 - Ezekiel 33:11** p864 is a very revealing verse about the heart of God for mankind.
 - When Christians pray for civil rulers so that there is peace, it allows for the gospel to be preached and men to be saved.
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- ...on the Role of Christians**
- Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy does not build in conditions that have to be met by government in order for Christians to pray.
 - We should pray for those in authority because:
 - ✓ God has placed them there
 - ✓ It is good (v3), or morally right.
 - ✓ It pleases God (v3). What higher reason do we need?
 - ✓ God wants people to be saved!
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When we pray for those in authority over us...

- ... it serves to remind us that they are under God's authority (Rom 13:1).
- ... we recognise the huge responsibility they have towards those they govern (Rom 13:4).

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Requests: Personal prayers made on special occasions for particular needs.

Prayers: Refers to all kinds of requests but mostly for general needs.

Intercessions: Prayers offered on behalf of other people and their known needs.

Thanksgiving: Prayers of gratitude for God's blessings and mercies. Our response is going to be a purely negative one unless we settle for this strong foundation of prayer.

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When praying for those in authority over us...

Pray for:

- ✓ A recognition that authority is 'delegated authority' from God.
- ✓ An acknowledgement that they are God's servants.
- ✓ Government to be exercised justly.
- ✓ Righteous laws to be passed and those which are not to be prevented from becoming law.
- ✓ Laws that will retain the freedom to preach the gospel and to live the Biblically centred life.
- ✓ Christians in government and parliament that they will be able to serve with Biblical integrity.

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When praying for particular individuals...

Pray for:

- ✓ Wisdom in the decisions and challenges they face.
- ✓ Humility that will enable them to use their power not for their own gain but for the good of the people.
- ✓ Integrity; that quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.
- ✓ Commitment to do what is best for those they have authority over
- ✓ Contact with godly people who will be in their circle of influence.
- ✓ Salvation; that they will come to know Christ as Saviour and Lord.

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Sittings in both Houses begin with prayers. In the Commons The Speaker's Chaplain usually reads the prayers. The form of the main prayer is as follows:

"Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of Parliament and all in positions of responsibility, the guidance of your Spirit. May they never lead the nation wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but laying aside all private interests and prejudices keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all mankind; so may your kingdom come and your name be hallowed. Amen."

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