
Words of Truth

Praying For Government Officials

By: Brian A. Yeager

We all know that prayer is a privilege reserved for the faithful of God's people (Proverbs 28:9, Isaiah 59:1-3, and I Peter 3:12). Prayer is something we have to be taught to do properly (Luke 11:1). We cannot just say whatever we want; however we want; in prayer to God. God expects our prayers to be in accordance with His will (James 4:3 and I John 5:14-15).

Knowledge of how to pray and what to pray for also requires a working knowledge of the Scriptures. We cannot turn in our Bibles, find a prayer, and repeat the points therein because someone else prayed that prayer. Not all acceptable prayers in the Scriptures apply today. For example, Jesus prayed to the Father multiple times. In one account (Matthew 6:9-13) He prayed not be lead into temptation and for the kingdom to come. Through supernatural means, God led teachers of the truth in the first century (Acts 16:1-10). God doesn't guide man by direct means now (II Timothy 3:15-17 and II Peter 1:3-4). The kingdom came in the first century (Colossians 1:12-13 and Hebrews 12:28). Therefore, though the terms in Jesus' prayer were acceptable when He was living on earth, things in that prayer are not acceptable today.

There are unchanging Scriptural principles to apply when we talk about prayer. For one, God has always given man freewill (Deuteronomy 5:29, Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Joshua 24:14-16, Matthew 10:22, Luke 8:4-15, John 8:31, Acts 2:40-41, Philippians 2:12, and Hebrews 3:6-14). If your prayer is asking God to make someone do something, He is not going to do that. Another principle is that God is not a respecter of persons (Job 34:19, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, and I Peter 1:17). Thirdly, we know that God does not give His Spirit to man as He did in the first century (Acts 8:12-24 and Acts 19:1-7) to work miracles through man (I Corinthians 12:1-13:13). So, our prayers should not be asking for God to work miracles on or through man today (i.e. healing, direct wisdom, etc.). These are things they could pray for in the first century (Ephesians 1:13-17 and James 5:13-14) that have ceased today. More on these things are written here: <http://www.wordsoftruth.net/PDFGivinganAnswerTheThingsWePrayForAnswers.pdf>

With all that we have just covered and should know already, we are going to take a look at a specific instruction in the Scriptures regarding prayer for, but not limited to, those in ruling positions. Are we to pray for our government? If so, what are we to pray about concerning them? Please keep in mind the principles we've covered, as this article will not have the space to keep going over them with every point. Let's start with what Paul said to Timothy.

For Kings And All In Authority

Paul wrote this to Timothy: *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, **be made for all men**; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is*

good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (I Timothy 2:1-8).

I have oft wondered why some, not all, read the text above and focus on the mentioning of kings and those in authority, but miss that the context says “all men”. I also find it confusing as to why some, not all, focus on “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life”, but miss the real point of the context. The real point of the context is NOT prayer for our benefit, but for the benefit of all men (kings and those in authority included) “to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”.

We know God is not going to make anyone do anything. He is not going to make rulers create laws to benefit or harm Christians. God’s appointment of civil authorities is for them to punish evildoers (Romans 13:1-7). He won’t make them do it, even if we beg Him to. Consider, what happened with the death of His only begotten Son. Weren’t there many injustices involved there with the civil authorities being at fault (Matthew 27:1-54)? Even when God chose kings (i.e. I Samuel 8:1-10:7) and directly gave them instructions (I Samuel 15:1-3); He did not make them do things (I Samuel 15:4-35). Even the king after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22) was permitted to do what he chose (II Samuel 11:1-12:24). Don’t forget those things. Even if God communicated with a ruler supernaturally, that ruler still had his or her freedom to choose right or wrong (Daniel 5:1-31). Knowing those things, could you pray to God and ask Him to have anyone in government make or uphold a law to the benefit or harm of anyone?

What we should be praying, for ALL MEN, is that God be longsuffering with them that they might have the opportunity to be saved (II Peter 3:9-10). That is what the context of Paul’s writing to Timothy was really addressing. We should desire that people will learn and see that God’s longsuffering, not His direct actions, can lead them to repentance (Romans 2:4). That is also what leads us to the point of us leading a quiet and peaceable life.

The Quiet And Peaceable Life

We should never, in any prayer, ask God to allow us to have a life without any physical persecution. That would not be in accordance with His will (Psalms 11:2, Psalms 37:32, Psalms 38:20, Proverbs 29:10, Matthew 5:10-12, John 15:18-21, John 16:1-3, John 16:33, II Timothy 1:8-12, II Timothy 3:11-12, I Peter 3:14-18, and I Peter 4:12-16). Therefore, we have to understand that the context of Paul’s writing to Timothy is NOT dealing with that. The peace and quietness we receive will come through our ability to see even the vilest of men whom do us harm and our want of good for them (Matthew 5:38-48; cf. Luke 23:33-34 and Acts 7:51-60). Consider how our proper thinking about things, in a spiritual manner, provides peace even amongst the great turmoil we can face in this world (Philippians 4:6-8).

Conclusion

Take the time to carefully review every Scripture in this article. The end result will surely be a better understanding of I Timothy 2:1-8.