

Pray For All People

Call to Worship: Psalm 19

1st Scripture: Romans 13:1-7

2nd Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Hymn #35- *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*

Hymn #89- *Come, Thou Almighty King*

Hymn #218- *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name*

Introduction:

In the context of false teachers, who were drifting away from the truth and embracing fables and distortions of the law, Paul has urged Timothy to charge some at Ephesus to get back on track, as it were, in accordance with the true doctrines given them by the Apostle Paul and his companions (when they were there). Moving on then, into chapter two, we enter the body of Paul's letter, where, in the face of such doctrinal distortions, Paul provides Timothy with a blueprint for church conduct, so that he might utilize it, as a means of securing and maintaining proper church order, in contrast to the disorder that would come about, if the false teachings were left unchecked.

This morning then, we consider the first portion of that blueprint, where Paul charges the brethren to pray for all people.

I. Pray for All People (vs. 1-2a)

"Therefore (as a part of the charge that I am entrusting to you, which you ought to enact there at Ephesus, in keeping with your God ordained calling), I exhort (encourage) first of all (as a first order of business) that supplications, prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority..." (vs. 1-2a).

Now, before we get into the reasons for this particular charge, consider a few important points that we ought to take from the charge itself:

1) We might wonder why this particular charge is given as a "first of all" charge by the Apostle Paul. Out of all of the important things that Paul addresses concerning the conduct of the church, why is this the "first of all" charge? Well, certainly, it shows that Paul considered the whole matter of prayer (and corporate/public prayer in this context, for that matter) as essential to life in the body of Christ (in the gathered assembly). But furthermore, relevant to the context,

it would seem to be the case that the brethren at Ephesus had an erroneous view of how to treat governing authorities.

It would not be counter human nature, to presume that the people at Ephesus saw their rulers and governors, who were anti-Christian; who persecuted Christians, as beyond the pale of God's grace. It would not be foolish to assume that they would further even wish harm and death upon them. Keep in mind that, more than likely, Nero (54-68AD) was also the reigning Caesar at this time. Again, suffice it to say that the rulers were not exactly favorable toward Christianity.

And so, Paul wanted Timothy, as a first order of business, to charge the brethren at Ephesus, to adopt a Christ-like mindset toward all of their enemies, including the governing rulers. So important was it to Paul, that they gain this proper mindset and prospective; so important was it to Paul that the brethren "pray for their enemies, bless those who curse them, and do good to those who spitefully use them," that he makes "praying for them," the first order of business, in this overall blueprint for church conduct and order.

2) We notice that Paul charges them to pray for *all* who were in authority...kings and governors and any others who held positions of authority and leadership throughout the Roman Empire. In other words, the scope of their prayers was not to be limited to those who were more favorable or better tolerant of Christians...etc. Again, Nero was more than likely the reigning Caesar (and even if he wasn't, none of the Caesars were angels).

3) When Paul commands them to pray for *all* men here, then, he literally means "all *types* of men; all classes; all positions," and not every single human being in the world (which would be impossible). We will see why understanding this is important, in a few moments. But suffice it to say that Paul is emphasizing the fact that they were not to limit their prayers to the lower classes or to those who had treated Christians kindly...etc. They were to pray for people of all classes, all offices and all positions in life.

4) Finally, notice the spectrum of descriptions which Paul uses to highlight the type of prayers which were to be offered up for all men. "Supplications, prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks" were to be made for all men. By using this variety of types of prayer (albeit, there is overlap here), Paul is going out of his way to say, "Look, plead with God in a favorable

way, on behalf of all men. Pray for their well being. Pray for their salvation. Recognizing their true needs, pray in very specific ways for God to meet those needs. When they are evil and wicked and even opposed to you, stand in the gap for them and intercede on their behalf, remembering their ultimate end. Indeed, give thanks for them, in so far, as they, even in their corruption, serve to restrain evil in the land, offering some measure of protection and advantage to you and others." All in all, in this thorough and complete description of the type and quality of prayer that is to be offered on behalf of all, Paul is calling them to pray for the well being, and absolute best (what God's people know to be best) for all people. It would be the very opposite of cursing someone (or wishing any kind of harm to come upon them), pleading with God to rather bless them instead.

And so, there we have the general charge to pray for all "types" of people. Let us then move on to consider the reasons for this charge.

II. The Reasons for this Charge (vs. 2b-6)

Paul gives Timothy two main reasons for this charge to pray for all people:

1) Pray for all men, for kings and all who are in authority "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (vs. 2b).

And so, what is Paul's first reason for why the church ought to pray for all people, and particularly those who are in governing offices? Well, simply put, so that the church will be able to conduct itself in a context of relative peace. When the governing authorities are doing well; when they are blessed (especially spiritually), the church is able to lead a quiet and peaceable life, striving to live godly and reverently before the Lord. Outside hindrances to the church's growth and prosperity are removed. There is freedom to worship God without fear and without the threat of being persecuted for that worship. The gospel is able to be disseminated without the threat of harm or death. Indeed, enemies of the church are stopped and the church is righteously protected by those who are in the position to offer such protection.

And so, praying for governing authorities actually serves to help enable the church to worship God freely, peacefully, reverently and joyfully, without any major outward obstruction...kind of like, what we have often taken for granted, here in our own country. [Ex:

Daniel before and after the lion's den-- freedom to pray; Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego before and after the fiery furnace-- freedom to worship God alone]

2) Paul moves on to add, that they ought to pray for all people, because "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (vs. 3-4). And so, not only does praying for all people, and particularly those in high offices, secure outward peace for the church, but furthermore, it is God's design to save not only lower class and average citizens, but also those in higher positions. God's grace does reach even corrupt and wicked kings and governors. While it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved, God can and does do what is impossible for man. He brings the camel through the eye of a needle!

It is good and acceptable (in God's sight) to pray for even wicked and corrupt rulers. God, our Saviour; God, the One who saves us and is in the business of saving filthy, wretched sinners, desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God redeems from all classes. His power and grace are made known in the salvation of horrifically sinful and child sacrificing, King Manasseh's, as well as young and lowly Davids and Marys. And so, when we consider this statement in its context, brethren, what is not being said is that God desires and designs that every single individual come to the truth and be saved, but rather, that he desires and designs that a remnant of people from every single type and class of people should come to the truth and be saved. Again, context is key here. The *all* here speaks of all types, all kinds, all ethnicities, and most particularly in this context, all classes. The church ought to pray for kings and governors and rulers, because God saves from among them as well. And it is, in being consistent with this idea, that we continue on to read these words...

"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..." (vs. 5-6). What is Paul's point in this "for" statement? He is further clarifying what he has just said, with an additional essential point. The same God, who has created regular citizens, has created and set up rulers, such that all belong to Him and are designed for His glory. And as such, every class of human being has the same dire need in Christ. The playing field is leveled, when it comes to sinners being reconciled and relating to God. There is only One Mediator, who brings all types of sinners to

God, and that is Christ Jesus. And this Jesus mediates for all people; He represents God to man and man to God, for all people, on the basis of His sacrifice for all (again *types of*) people. By His atoning sacrifice, He has paid the ransom for all (again *types*) of people (all classes), which was manifested in due time. And so, if Jesus died for kings and governors, as well as for average citizens, then those average citizens who are redeemed, ought not to limit their prayers of intercession for average citizens, as if the rulers (as wicked and anti-Christian as they might naturally be) are beyond the pale and reach of God's grace.

Paul knows very well that the natural tendency of average people would be to despise and neglect those who are in ruling positions, because of their public corruption and evident abuse of power. And so, he wants to transfer the gaze of the brethren, from the utter wickedness of the rulers, to the power, glory and reach of Christ's grace! He wants to erase the line of demarcation from the redeemed standpoint, such that they will recognize and long for the redemption of all people and not simply particular races or classes of people. All are welcome, because God delights in bringing every category of people to the truth and salvation, which are in Christ. He saves the Nicodemus's and the Mary Magdalene's, the Zacchaeus's and the lepers, the King Mannaseh's and the Shunnamite women...etc.

Finally, Paul adds then, "for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (vs. 7). Here again, Paul highlights his own testimony, as one, who has been called to testify to this glorious gospel, which is worldwide in its scope, as a teacher of the Gentiles, which itself is a glorious testimony of the expansion of God's grace to every people group in the world. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is an example (and a larger example at that) of God's glorious design and desire to bring all people (all people types/groups) to the truth of the gospel. For a Jewish man (and a former Pharisee at that) to be God's arm to the Gentiles is a deeper well even than God's call for the church to pray for kings, rulers, governors...etc. And so, Paul puts forth his own ministry, in a very compelling way, so as to highlight an additional powerful reason for the brethren at Ephesus to pray for their governing rulers (and authorities) as well. [See also 9:15-16; Jewish religious leaders; the Sanhedrin; Governor Felix; Governor Festus; King Agrippa...to mention some]

Needless to say, these are the reasons which Paul gives to motivate the church to pray for all people.

III. Closing Thoughts and Applications

Having worked through our main text for this morning then brethren, let us conclude our time by considering a few closing thoughts and applications:

1) Never grow cold or dull to the glorious reality of the extent to which the benefits of Christ's atonement reach. You see, brethren, the glory of all that Paul states here is not fixed so much on the objects of God's mercy, as it is on the glory of the one who secured such a worldwide redemption. The magnitude of the reach of the gospel is not meant to get us to marvel only at the four corners of the earth where the light reaches, but rather, at the source of the light itself, which is so great and glorious that it reaches that far!

There is no one who is beyond the scope or reach of Christ's grace. To be sure, there are thieves and adulterers and rapists and child molesters and murderers...etc, who are right now in heaven because Christ's grace is so large and wide; it abounds so far and deep that it literally can swallow the worst of sins, committed by the worst of sinners, amongst all redeemed sinners combined. It doesn't simply equal it, it envelops it and swallows it up!

2) And brethren, that is why there ought to be no one; not a single person in this world, who is beyond the scope of our prayer. Now, let's get very practical here. We have an election coming up very soon, and as it stands right now, barring a divine intrusion, either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton will be our next president. Now, if we took a poll in this church, I would venture to presume that neither one of these two candidates even remotely suits our ideal choice. There's a lot of baggage here, isn't there?

All of that said, whoever gets in office, whether the words, "President Trump" or "President Clinton" are posted in the paper on the day after the election, we have to presume that the principles which Paul gives in this text, are applicable to this church and to us as individuals. And so, what are we then called to do? We are called to pray for them, wishing the best for their well being and prosperity, for the sake of the peace of the church, and because God delights in saving Donald Trumps and Hillary Clintons (and even the worst of the worst, who fill such high

offices). Furthermore, Christ is glorified in redeeming such individuals as these. [Include local governors, senators, congressman, mayors...etc]. [Even giving thanks for...in some respect]

Now brethren, keep these two things in mind as we wrestle through this principle:

A- The only hope for these individuals is Jesus Christ. As rotten as any individual might be, God is still the God who created them, and to whom they belong. And there is only one Mediator for all human beings, and that is Jesus Christ! They desperately need the same grace that we thrive on. Eternity is a long time. If we saw any such people in hell; if we could peer there in the present, we would weep for them.

B- We are naturally no better, are we? Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are from the same cloth of Adam and Eve, and we would be foolish to assume for a moment even, that if we were in their position and left to our own natural wills, that we would be any less evil than they are. Men, are you really surprised by Donald Trump's lewd comments? I'm not endorsing him here, but realistically, if we were given a transcript of all of your private conversations (as a non-Christian, or even as a Christian for that matter), what would we see? Again, I'm not telling you how to vote, but in every case, let's never forget where we came from. And let us pray for whomever God puts in office. [Also, Hillary's greed and corruption]

3) Friends, recognize in all of this, that the glory of the gospel is that there is actually hope for *you* this morning, if you are presently outside of Jesus Christ! There is no sinner who is beyond the reach of Christ's love and grace!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25