

# A Church Prayer Guide, p.1

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**Bible Text:** 1 Timothy 2:1-8  
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Well, grab your Bibles and go to 1 Timothy. If you are visiting with us today, we're preaching through the New Testament book of 1 Timothy. We come to 1 Timothy 2. 1 Timothy 2. Ah, this is, ah, a rather, um, unique message for a day when we take the Lord's Supper but not really, not really when we look at it. Often I will preach about the Lord's Table when we take it, but I put this off already for a week and I want to get into it, however, because we're doing so much this morning, I'll have to make this a two-parter.

1 Timothy chapter 2, rather, beginning in verse 1. Paul writes, the senior pastor if you will, writes to his young understudy Timothy whom he's put over the church at Ephesus and he's writing to him to instruct him, so in 1 Timothy 2:1 he says,

1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, and petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of our God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

Now we're talking about beautifying the bride because what Paul is doing in writing to Timothy is telling him how he's to fashion and function the local church; how the church is to be according to God's word, and we come to chapter 2 and we see he's continuing, of course, in his, ah, exhortations to Timothy about the local church. Now we make no apology here for being strongly centered on the church, that is, the local church, because the church is the centerpiece of God's purposes and God's glory for time and eternity. Jesus came to build his church. Matthew 16:18, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock," that's the rock of his statement that he's the Christ, the Son of the living God, on the rock of that truth, Jesus says, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Jesus is about building his church. The Bible also reminds us that

the church is his prized purchase. The Bible tells us the church is his bride and he's the groom. The Bible tells us the church is his body and he is the head, and we remind ourselves of Ephesians 3:21, "to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

The church is the centerpiece of God's purposes and God's glory both for time and eternity. There'll be a lot of things that will not be in existence in the eternal state when we all get to heaven. We will not know each other as families and husband and wife in heaven, the Bible says, but we will be together as the church, the called out ones, the bride of Christ. You see, the church is not one of many, the church is a one and only. All enterprises that are under, undertaken for God and that will matter for eternity are to be connected to an contending for the church, the local church. All that is not Gospel-bought, Spirit-wrought, and local church established will not remain but the church is that entity that remains forever.

Now in review through chapter 1, Paul was writing to Timothy about false teachers. There were some who'd sneaked into the church here and began teaching things that sounded like good Christianity but it was actually a twist or a spin on things, and it was false. These false teachers not only teach unsound doctrine, they also are prone to fall into immoralities and they begin to misuse leadership roles for self-pleasure, for self-power and for self-profit, and so Paul tells Timothy in chapter 1, we've already seen this, "You must confront these men and call them to repentance and if they do not repent, they're to be excommunicated from the church." These false teachers can cause great severe damage to God's local church.

Then we get to chapter 2, our text for today, and he says, "Now first of all having said all that I've said about you cleaning up some bad teaching and bad teachers in the local church at Ephesus, now I want to talk about that all important spiritual discipline of prayer." So I call this a prayer guide for the church. It's not the prayer guide, the Bible has a lot of things to say about prayer, but it is an important prayer guide for the local church. The prayer is essential to the building up and to the good of God's church.

Now I., let's start off by noting that Paul tells Timothy, "Make sure you're praying for all." Very simple truth. Make sure you're praying for all. He said, "I want you to lift up prayers on behalf of all men." Now I'll get to this and elaborate more in a moment, but evidently the church at Ephesus where Timothy's pastoring is, ah, they've gotten out of balance, they've gotten too inwardly focused, and they have forgotten not only do they pray for one another in this difficult world, they're to pray for everyone else too.

Now first of all, he gives Timothy a dissection of prayer. He kinda breaks prayer down into various parts. Look at it there in verse 1, he says, "I urge that entreaties and prayers." I want to talk about the word "prayer" first. This word is a unique word and it's only used in the New Testament to refer to addressing God. It's talking about that holy and sacred activity. Prayer is a sacred duty and a sacred blessing. Prayer is a holy duty and a holy blessing. We get to pray. Our prayers are effective because we go through the Son of God Jesus Christ. Many men pray but only one prayer is heard and that's the prayer that goes

through the agency of Christ Jesus our Lord. So it's a great wonderful blessing privilege and a duty that we're to be involved in.

Then he uses the word "entreaties, I want entreaties to be made on behalf of all men." An entreaty here has the idea of expressing a need. Pray to God about what you see is a need and pray this for all men and all men's needs.

Then he has the word "petition, I want you to petition." This means to take up a cause. It can have the idea of being persistent.

Then he adds to that thanksgiving, always with thanksgiving. We see this throughout the Scriptures, that however we go to God and however we entreat the Lord or petition the Lord, we always have that flavored with a humble grateful heart for all he's done for us and for all that he is.

Now when we think about entreaties and petitions and thanksgiving all a part of our prayers, these different parts are really like bodily organs that are interdependent and interrelated. They blend together. It's really impossible sometimes to know where one stops and the other begins. A dissection of prayer.

Now secondly, let's notice the direction of prayer. Where are our prayers to be directed? Well, he just kicks off here in chapter 2 saying, "Now I want you to be praying on behalf of all men." So he says, "Timothy, make sure in the church you guys are praying for the needs of all men." Now that's interesting and, again, I, I, I agree with the scholars that surmise that what was probably happening as, ah, is that the church at Ephesus here that, ah, Timothy's pastoring, had gotten out of balance. Have you ever heard me talk about balance, that balance is important? If we're not careful we'll get on one truth the Bible clearly teaches, but we start to ride that horse to the exclusion of another truth that's equally important? Well, evidently the church at Ephesus had gotten inwardly focused and really concerned about themselves and that's not wrong, that is your major priority as a Christian, your local church, but they had forgotten that also they need to pray for others.

They might of thought this way, "Now we're the church." The Greek word for "church" is "ekklesia," it means "God's called out ones." God called us out of the world. God, God called us out of the realm that's overseen by Satan and wickedness and evil. We're to be an oasis of holiness and, and sanity and morality. We're, we're to help and serve and minister and care for one another. That's all true, all biblical, but I think what Paul is telling Timothy is this, "Even though you are an assembly called out from the world and what is most important to you should be your local church and its ministries, that does not mean you no longer have to function in this world." We're still God's church in the world. Now one day we will not be, one day we'll be his glorified bride and everything else will be banished and removed, but we're not there yet and perhaps that's what the church at Ephesus needs to be reminded of.

Here's what I think we need to think about, that the well-being of our society or our culture does indeed affect the well-being of the church. Did you hear that? Remind ourselves, now listen, we are right now God's called out assembly, God's church, but we are in the world. Paul tells Timothy, "Timothy, be reminded and remind the church that while you are focused on yourselves and that's proper, don't forget that the well-being of the local church to some degree is contingent upon the well-being of the culture that you are in."

Now let's get the context of this particular situation. Right now, of course, Rome rules the known world and Rome was not a godly government, trust me. Nero was the Roman Emperor at this time and Nero was a particularly evil, vile and cruel man. Nero, among murdering others of his own family, even murdered his own mother over power and control issues in the Empire. You might remember from reading history that there was a great fire in Rome in AD 64. Many people speculated Nero himself set the fire because he'd been talking about expanding his already palatial palace, he wanted more room to build even a grander palace, and he needed to remove some things out of the way, so he just set the fire and burned it, at least that's what the gossip was. Nero understanding this was going around, he needed a scapegoat so Nero diverted the blame for this fire to another group that was a particularly easy target. This was a group that was despised by the culture for their doctrine and for their lifestyle. What group was it Nero made the scapegoat? Christians. The church. Nero pronounces the Christians who did this, "It's the Christians who started this fire." And so systemic terrible persecution broke out against believers and against the church of Jesus Christ.

You might remember reading about how Nero had poles put throughout Rome and he had Christians hung on poles and he put oil on them and lit them on fire to light the streets of Rome at night. That's what these folks have been through, so we can understand perhaps in that context, because many of them believed Nero was the antichrist and the end was about to come, and we can understand that. They were going through horrible horrible persecution so when Paul writes to Timothy and says, "Pray for all of your leaders, even those out there in the world," you can understand they probably said, "Us pray for Nero? He's of the antichrist. He's of Satan. All of it's of Satan." True but you're out of balance. God in his sovereignty can bless you and use you even in a satanic world. Did God, God not use the wicked and evil king Cyrus of Persia after he conquered the Babylonians to send the children of Israel back home to rebuild their temple and worship God properly? Do you understand God can make a straight line with a crooked stick? God's sovereign over all things so Paul reminds Timothy, "Be praying for all. Have your balance," the Bible reminds us in Galatians 6:10 that we're to do good for all men as we can, but especially for those of the household of the faith.

So that's the balance I think Paul was writing to Timothy about, it's the balance we need to walk in, that we know we're primarily to take care of one another in God's church but we also have concerns for the culture around us. As you remember just what a few weeks ago, we had a terrible flood in our area and some of our church members were affected, and an army of our church members, and by the way, I was glad to hear a man outside of our church heard about some of our church members' houses being really destroyed

almost by the flood, and immediately that man who's not a member of the church said, "The army of Grace Life Church will be there tomorrow. Watch and see." I like it that it's known in the community that we take care of each other. And we went to those folks' houses after the floodwaters resided and there was an army of men and some ladies working. Just roughly off the top of my head, I would estimate our men put in 300 hours of work helping those families and I think everything is back the way it ought to be now. We helped them in some other ways also, but we also helped some of the neighbors around our church members who needed help, put some sheet rock up and finished a guy's basement. We just told him, "We're gonna do that as a gift to you." Now we don't fly these banners a lot but that's what we like to do. We're to take care of the household of the faith but as we can, minister and care for others also. Do you get the balance, church? I think that's where Paul was getting to with Timothy. Yes, take care of one another but remember pray for all of those outside of the church also.

Now II., praying that governing authorities would bring blessings upon the church. Now this might be unusual and you might say, "Well, this is sort of a practical thing." Do you know who really invented the term "spiritual common sense"? The Puritans, the most devoted biblical people of the last 2,000 years. The Puritans used to talk about Christian or spiritual common sense, sometimes things if you'd just think about it, they're very practical and common sensical, and so that's where I think Paul's getting to here, you're in this life, you're in this culture, the power that be's are non-Christian, hate your morals, hate your values, hate what you stand for, but pray for them that God might move on them so that you can function as you need to function in this wicked world.

Notice how he words it here, ah, let's see, in verses, um, verse 2, he says, "praying for kings and all who are in authority," or in high positions, "so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." So now when he says to the kings and all who are authority, again to these Ephesians who've suffered such vicious persecution from their Emperor, they might of thought, "Really, Paul? We're supposed to pray for these people? They're slaughtering us." Yes, you're to pray for them. You're to pray to a specific end, though. He says, "Pray for these that we might lead a tranquil life in quietness and all godliness and reverence." Pray that God would so work in your leaders in your culture that the church might be blessed because God can do that.

Can I confess to you, Grace Life Church, this morning, I've failed here. I do pray for our leaders but I want to be more fervent and more faithful and more diligent in appealing to God that he would so work in our world leaders, particularly our country's leaders, that the church can go on and do what God's called her to do.

First of all he says, "Pray for these kings and all who are in authority," he says, "that we might live a tranquil life." The word "tranquil" has the idea of stillness. It means that we as the church are, are functioning with no need to run and no need to fret. It speaks of a peace within. Pray that they will so legislate and rule in your country that Christians in their churches won't feel the need to run or be fretting over anything. Then he says, "Pray that we'd have a quiet life." This has the idea of being undisturbed, no bother from without. First of all, pray that you'd have a tranquil peace within built by the way those

governing authorities rule, and you'll have a, a, a, a peace in that you're not fretting about anything that might come in from outside of you. Then he says "in all godliness," that is, to live out our Christian convictions and our Gospel duties in the church and in the world. Then with reverence, in a way that honors and pleases the Lord.

So let's summarize what he's telling Timothy here. Pray for all of your leaders in your country that you might carry out your service to Christ in a respectable manner, not disturbed or hindered by governing authorities. Pray that we as the church can continue as Christians in this world in peace without molestations, troubles, or problems from those on the outside. So notice he's not, he's not at this point, we'll get to that in a moment, he's not at this point saying, "Pray that all your leaders will be godly Christians." That's a good thing to pray, we'll get to that in a moment. Right now he's saying, "Even if you live under an ungodly Nero or a very flawed arrogant Donald Trump, but pray that he would so administrate, he would so advance policies, and he would so appoint judges that the church can go on doing her job, standing on her convictions without threats, disturbances and molestations from the government." Are you with me, church?

Now you know why I said I might entitle this, "Why I Voted for Donald Trump." He may be Nero-like in some ways, but God can use Nero-type guys even to bless good stuff though we don't approve of some of his personal carryings-on and immoralities and shenanigans. But now to be fair to Donald Trump, he's stated to men that I have some respect for that he's changed, he's not the man he used to be. I don't know about that but I do know this, I wouldn't give you a half a nickel for his chances to be a real Christian. No man that says, "I've never told anybody I'm sorry," I don't think can know Christ. But I do think it's possible for God to use a man like that to the benefit and the blessing of God's church. That's what Paul's telling Timothy to pray for.

You remember the Colorado baker, Jack Phillips? This man owns a bakery. He's a devout Christian and he refused to bake a cake for a homosexual wedding, the state of Colorado sues him, case goes all the way to the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court rules strongly in Jack's favor. Then he comes back and they set him up again, some transgendered come in and they want a transgendered-themed birthday cake made, and Jack Phillips says again, "Because of my Christian convictions, I can't bless that or, or promote that." And the state of Colorado files suit again but I understand now they have dropped that suit. Jack Phillips can understand this praying, "Pray that all in authority over us will leave us alone. Let us go on with our convictions and our beliefs and our principles without molesting us and hindering us so we can function with a tranquil and quiet spirit in all godliness and reverence." Well, the next time somebody tells you how you're supposed to vote, go to this text right here and say, "This is what God told Paul to tell Timothy we're to base our voting on as Christians."

Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes." We can seek God and he can get ahold of the President's heart, he can get ahold of the Supreme Court justices' hearts and turn them to favor God's

work and God's people. Here's my question, church. I've confessed my lack, are you diligently praying for kings and all who are in authority?

There is this notion going around in some Christian circles that if a person personally has a, a, a, an immoral lifestyle, that there's no way Christians should ever support them. That's just clearly not what the Bible is saying. Sure, if they have the right biblical policies and biblical convictions and biblical programs they're gonna implement and they are individually a good Christian, got my vote. Unfortunately, we don't always have that choice, do we? Unfortunately, the Ephesians didn't have that choice because nobody was gonna vote Nero out of office but they could pray.

Here's what second century theologian, highly respected early church father, Tertullian, said about this whole thing. He said, "Without ceasing," now he's under the Roman Empire, Tertullian was, second century AD, "Without ceasing for all of our Emperors, we offer prayer. We pray for life prolonged, for security to the Empire, for protection to the Imperial House, for brave armies, a faithful Senate, a virtuous people, and a world at rest." That's what early church father Tertullian said about this text is how we're to pray for a very ungodly government, the Roman government of this day. Tertullian further stated that persecutions of the Roman Empire or rather the preservation, I should say, of the Roman Empire was better than Rome being overcome by her enemies. He said, "Of all that's going on in the world, when I see all the wickedness of Rome, I see worse out of the other enemies that would come against Rome, and for the church to do the best she can, I'd rather Rome be preserved and not that other bunch get in power. As bad as Rome is, they're better than the other ones."

It sounds like the lesser of two evils to me. That's where we...look, folks, everything you do in life is the lesser of two evils. When you got married, you picked the lesser of two or four, eight evils because there are no perfect people. We're all fallen. We all have an evil part of us. Some of you go out and go to work, these young people, you'll pick some jobs, you'll say, "Well, this one's got these five bad things, this one's got two bad things, I'll take the lesser of the evils." That's the way it is in a fallen world and we can pontificate about all these high and lofty things about, "Well, I'll not cast a vote if they're not Billy Graham." Well, then you're just giving leadership to those who would harass and persecute the church.

Tertullian continues and I quote, "We have no desire, then, to be overtaken by these dire events," that means Rome's enemies to overtake her, "and in praying that their coming may be delayed, we are lending our aid to Rome's duration." Tertullian said, "We hope the Empire of Rome under Nero continues on because it would be better than anything else we see out there as far as the church is concerned."

Listen to me, church. Listen, listen, do you know what's chief on God's heart? His church and when you implore God on behalf of the good of his church, I'm telling you, God hears you. God hears you.

Do you believe all of this is in the Bible? Isn't the word of God good? It helps us, doesn't it?

I am a gnat's hair away, I use that a lot lately, don't I, gnat's hair? I am a gnat's hair away from diving right into the Republican platform and the Democratic platform and Donald Trump and other things because it's.... Say, "Preacher, stay out of politics." I'll stay out of politics when the word of God doesn't address what's going on politically. But I don't have time so you'll have to get it next time. I'm sorry.

Can, can I charge you before we present these dear...our new church members are saying, "What am I going this morning? This guy.... What kind of church is this?" I can tell you what it is, it's a biblical church because that's what the word of God says. Can I get an amen there, church? That's what the word of God says.

Here, here's what I remind you of this morning: you may read online and hear people that are supposed to be brilliant and great leaders, may even wear the cloak of their prophets, that you can't support this President, you can't support this government because individually there's a lot of corrupt and evil things. Well, I don't support any of that, but if the positions are helpful to the cause of Christ and his church, that's what I must support. There's a difference between embracing the individual and supporting the positions and that's what Paul's telling Timothy and that's what our early church father Tertullian was talking about.

Well, if you want to be a faithful Christian, discipline yourself to pray for our kings and all who are in authority for the good of the church and the glory of God. Now there's a lot more to pray and we'll get to that next time we're together, alright, Lord willing.