

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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We Need To Pray! (Part 6)

I Timothy 2:1-2, 8

Having considered the process of prayer, we now move on to **The People for Prayer**. We looked at this a little when we discussed the process of prayer, but now we will go back to I Timothy 2 and look at it with a little more detail. In thinking about prayer, sometimes the question is asked, “For whom should I pray?” I Timothy 2 and other passages answer that question.

The first thing that we can notice about the people for prayer is The Expanse. I Timothy 2:1 says, “*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.*” We have looked at all of this verse except for the last five words. That is what we will focus on now—“*be made for all men.*”

What does this mean? Obviously, I think we can say that we are not obligated to pray for every person all over the world. That would be an impossible, never ending task. What I do think we can ascertain from these words is that no one is beyond the scope of prayer. There is no person, no matter what condition they may be in, or where in the world they may be, that is beyond the reach of our prayer.

Many times missionaries come into churches to raise support, both financially and, more importantly, prayer. You will be in your home area, whether that is the Southeast, the Midwest, or some other place. While you are in your area, you can pray for that missionary in the other part of the country or on the other side of the world. Do you see what a wonderful privilege we have in prayer? We are not just limited to praying for people that we see every day. We should

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pray for them, and I hope that we do, but we can pray for “*all men,*” even the missionary that we do not see very often. That is how powerful prayer is. We can pray for someone across the United States or across the ocean, and God can hear and meet that need.

If we can understand the power and privilege of prayer, I believe the missionary prayer letters will become more than just something that we expect missionaries to send out, but that we really have no interest in reading. In most churches, if we are honest, the vast majority of missionary prayer letters go unread. Many of the envelopes are never opened. Many are placed on walls in missionary display cases, but are often passed by and never read. We say that we care about missionaries, but do we care enough to pray for them? I grew up in a “missions-minded” church, but to be honest, I cannot recall ever hearing a prayer letter read, or the prayer needs of missionaries mentioned. We gave lots of money, but a personal contact with missionaries and their needs was often neglected.

Because of this great privilege of praying for “*all men,*” we can read the prayer letters and pray for those missionaries, no matter where they are. Beyond that, we can pray for the needs that others may have. There is nothing, nor anyone beyond the reach of prayer. Do we really believe that? Paul did. And he gave the exhortation, through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, in I Timothy 2:1 to do just that—pray for all men.

Not only is the expanse mentioned concerning the people for prayer, but also The Examples are given. In I Timothy 2:2, Paul explains the thought of “*all men*” given at the end of verse 1. As we have just seen, I have taken those two words to describe the unlimited reach of prayer. But Paul gets a little more particular when he says, “*For kings, and for all that are in authority.*” That is a mighty big order. We must pray for *Those in Power*.

Mostly, all we want to do is complain about those in government. But do you realize that complaining, for any reason, is never

permitted in Scripture? But, someone asks, “What should we do when the politicians do things that are not right?” The answer is given in I Timothy 2:2—pray for them. Perhaps, if we spent more time praying for them, rather than complaining about them, God would work in their hearts.

As we have seen earlier, and will see again later, other passages refer to other people that we can pray for. But our focus right now is upon “*kings, and for all that are in authority.*” Why are the governmental leaders mentioned in particular in this passage? I can only guess as to the reason, but perhaps they are listed because they are the first group that no one thinks about. We know about our own needs, but do we ever consider the great burden that governmental leaders have?

It is interesting to consider this passage in the light of the time in which Paul wrote it. Paul lived during the time of the Roman empire. There were no elections for the leadership of the country. The caesar was in power because of family relations or because he had killed the previous caesar. Locally, the man was in power because he found favor with the Roman government. Unless I have forgotten my ancient history, the only elected leaders were the Senate in Rome, and by this time, their power was almost nonexistent. I mention this, so we can better understand the context in which Paul was writing. He was not writing in a time period of a great political leader. He was not writing this because the man that he wanted to be caesar had won the election. He had no choice, and yet the exhortation is given—pray for those in authority. If we are not praying for them, then we are disobedient to Scripture.

Now we can apply this to the day in which we live. We, as Americans, can vote for our leaders. If the one that we vote for is elected, we should pray for them while they are in office. If the one that we did not vote for is elected, we must pray for them as well. Notice that the verse does not say, “Pray for them when they do right.” There is no restriction given. All leaders are to be prayed for.

I believe that we should pray that those in authority will do what is right. When they do what is wrong, I believe that we should still pray for them. Maybe God can gain control of their heart and cause them to change. This goes back to the expanse of prayer. No person is beyond the reach of prayer. We may never personally meet our governmental leaders, but we can pray for them. God can reach their hearts by our prayer for them.

As I mentioned earlier, perhaps this is the problem in our country. We do not bother to consistently pray for our leaders. We get concerned around election time, but then for the next two or four years, most of us never think about it. When a wrong policy is instituted, we will complain, but we must ask ourselves, “Did I pray that God would stop this from being instituted? Did I pray for the leaders to make wise decisions about this legislation?”

Perhaps more could be said, but we must move on to our next thought. Before we do, let me add one other thing. Sometimes it may be necessary to pray for the removal of one in authority. We must use caution, and only do so after much prayer is made in behalf of that leader. But if they continue to practice and promote things contrary to God’s Word, we may need to ask God to do what Daniel said He can do in Daniel 2:21—“*He removeth kings.*” Whatever situation we may find ourselves in, may we be obedient to the exhortation to pray for those in authority.

In II Thessalonians 3:1, we find another example of people for prayer. We must pray for *Those who Preach*. In this epistle, Paul writes back to the church that he had started in Thessalonica. In the closing chapter of the epistle, he gives the command and request, “*Finally, brethren, pray for us.*” We will look at the remainder of the verse later in the message, but I want to focus on the first few words of the verse right now.

I can only imagine what went through the hearts of the people in Thessalonica when this epistle was read to them. Paul is asking them

to pray for him. Some of them in the church had been converted under Paul's preaching as recorded in Acts 17. Others had been converted through the preaching that the pastor of the church had been doing since Paul left. Now about a year later, Paul has continued his journey and is asking for them to pray for him. Because of their thankfulness for what Paul did for them in preaching the gospel, they undoubtedly responded with prayer. They are thankful that they can pray for this man who was so instrumental in their lives.

We look at Paul as some great man of God. He was, but do you know why? Because he knew that he was utterly dependent upon prayer. Paul was a great preacher and accomplished much for God, not because of his talents, but because he knew how essential prayer was to God's work. We will often make excuses as to why we cannot get much done, but are we praying as we ought to pray? Are we encouraging and pleading with others to pray? On the other hand, are we praying for God's preachers? It is commanded that we do so. May we obey that command.