

1 Timothy

I. Introduction

A. **1 Timothy 2:1-6** . . . First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, 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 God our Savior, [4] who desires all men to be saved and to 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 as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

B. Pray

II. What is our attitude toward unbelievers and those in authority?

A. The primary focus of **vs 1-6** is our attitude toward humanity – and especially our attitude toward unbelievers and those in positions of authority – be it government authorities, work authorities, school authorities, or parents.

1. The reason our attitude toward unbelievers and those in authority is so important is because our attitude significantly influences how we pray for, talk about, and treat these two groups – especially when they do not live up to our expectations of them.

2. For example, in our country, a growing number of unbelievers – be they in the general population or in positions of authority – view Christians as the enemy and as a lesser form of humanity. Yet sadly, many Christians view unbelievers and those in authority with much the same perspective and attitude.

a. For example, it seems more and more Christians are viewing unbelievers as fools whose politics need to be attacked and fought against. And all the while Christians are doing this, they are neglecting to do anything meaningful about the lost and unrepentant condition of the unbelievers. Without question, this perspective and attitude negatively effects the way Christians pray for and speak about unbelievers. Yet, this is not God's attitude toward them.

b. Here in **vs 3-4**, Paul reminds us that “God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” And

God supports His desire with actions. Do you desire all men to be saved?

- c. In speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, God said that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Rather, His pleasure comes from sinners turning from their evil ways so that they may live (**Ezekiel 18:23**). What pleases you more? A sinner repenting and coming to faith in God, or you being freed from having to endure a sinner's bad behavior?
- d. Peter points out that the Lord is not slow about His promise to return, even though some see it that way. Rather, God is being patient toward unbelievers, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (**2 Peter 3:9**).
- e. Now it is true that there are places and times when unbelievers horribly mistreat Christians. Yet even in these situations Jesus says to us, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (**Matthew 5:43-45**).
- f. What is your attitude toward unbelievers? Does it mirror God's attitude toward them?
 - (1) This does not mean you cannot honestly assess their choices and behavior, or that you cannot address the threat they pose to your well-being, your family's well-being, or the well-being of our community or nation.
 - (2) After all, God is honest about their behavior, yet He sees them through eyes of compassion and deals with them with an attitude of patience, mercy, and even long-suffering.
- g. Jesus looked over Jerusalem and wept because He saw their approaching doom which was the result of rejecting God and an ongoing sinful life-style (**Luke 19:41-44**). Do you look at unbelievers and feel a sense of sadness, or even weep because of the doom that awaits them?
- h. If your over-riding attitude toward unbelievers – including those who make your life difficult – is like God's attitude, then give praise to God and keep it up. But if this is not your over-riding attitude, then I urge you to replace your attitude with God's attitude so that His attitude is reflected in your prayers, your words, and your deeds in relation to unbelievers.

3. Regarding those in authority, it has increasingly become common for Christians to look at authority with a general sense of disrespect, and as a result, to excessively or even wrongly criticize them, and to exaggerate their faults and failures while ignoring their qualities and the good things they have done. Even sadder, this kind of disrespect has deteriorated into Christians ridiculing and even demonizing those in authority – so as to use blatantly derogatory or even vile language when talking about them.
- a. Paul spoke against this kind of ungodly attitude in **Titus 3:1–3**, “Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, [2] to malign no one (*to publicly and unfairly disparage their character*), to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. [3] (*And why are we do have a godly attitude toward those in authority?*) [Because] we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.”
 - b. Back in **Exodus 22:28**, God gave this command, “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.”
 - c. We read in **Acts 23:3-5**, that Paul lived according to this command. “Then Paul said to the [high priest], ‘God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?’ [4] But the bystanders said, ‘Do you revile God’s high priest?’ [5] And Paul said, ‘I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”
 - d. And we read in **1 Timothy 6:1**, “All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.”
 - (1) Do you see the reasoning? When we talk disrespectfully and derogatorily about those in authority, when we exaggerate the wrong and ignore the good, when we ridicule and demonize those in authority, we are opening the door for the unbelieving world to justifiably speak against God, the teachings of the Bible, and the Christian way of life.
 - (2) Our attitude toward unbelievers and those in authority not only affects our prayers for them and how we speak about them, it also affects how unbelievers see God, how they see

the word of God, how they see Christianity in general, and how they see us as individual Christians.

(3) Therefore, Jesus said to “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works (*that is, your words and deeds*), and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (**Matthew 5:16**).

4. Paul reinforces how important it is to pray for unbelievers and those in authority by using four words that represent different kinds of prayer for them – entreaties, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings.
 - a. To **entreat** is to ask God earnestly and with urgency in an effort to persuade Him to do what it is we are asking Him to do.
 - b. To **pray** is to talk to God as if asking for a favor – knowing that we would like Him to respond affirmatively, but leaving it up to Him to decide what He will do.
 - c. To **petition** is to present our request in a solemn and formal way, as if petitioning a judge in a court of law.
 - d. To give **thanks** is to express gratitude to God for favors given, petitions granted, mercies shown, and for the good that can be found in and around the situation or person for whom we are praying.
 5. It seems to me that there are three reasons Paul uses these four descriptive yet similar words in relation to prayer.
 - a. **First**, to emphasize the need to pray – after all, our safety, the well-being of our community and nation, and the salvation of unbelievers are at stake.
 - b. **Second**, to remind us that there is more than one way to present our needs and desires to God – so use any or all of the methods, and allow others to do the same.
 - c. **Third**, to never lose sight of the good God has done and is doing in spite of how bad things are.
- B. The end of **vs 1** and the beginning of **vs 2** state that these kinds of prayers are to “be made on behalf of all men, [2] for kings and all who are in authority,”
1. In other words, there is no family member, no neighbor, no co-worker, no community member, no boss, no government official, no president or king or ruler of any kind who is so evil, so cruel, so unjust, so abusive of power, or so self-righteous that we should not pray for his or her salvation and the well-being of everyone they effect – from family members to fellow citizens.

2. There is one more point to be made here. To pray like this is a demonstration of godly love and compassionate concern for three groups of people.
 - a. **First**, for unbelievers,
 - b. **Second**, for those in authority,
 - c. And **third**, for all who are negatively affected by the choices and behavior of unbelievers and those in authority.
- C. Paul concludes **vs 2** with the first of two reasons to pray this way. The first reason is **[2b] so that** we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.
1. Notice, God exhorts us to pray for those in authority rather than become political activists and do battle against them – in one form or another – in an effort to force them to make life better and safer for us.
 2. Sadly, it is all too common for today’s Christians to believe that human power accomplishes more than God’s power when it comes to influencing those in leadership and directing the course of the nation.
 - a. Yet God’s word says in **Psalm 33:16-20**, “The king is not saved by a mighty army; a warrior is not delivered by great strength. [17] A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. [18] Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, [19] to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. [20] [Therefore, let us wait] for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.”
 - b. Peter put it this way in **1 Peter 3:10-12**, “The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. [11] He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. [12] For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”
 3. This raises the question: “Do you believe in the power of God to turn the heart of the king (*the one in authority*) this way or that?”
 - a. If you do believe in the power of God to affect the choices and behavior of those in authority, do you then rely on the power of prayer to move God to support you and bring His situation altering power to bear on the authority and situation?

- b. Though this isn't always the Christian's experience, God wants His children to lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Therefore, we are wise to pray that He will make our circumstances agree with His desire.
- D. However, this isn't the only reason to pray for unbelievers and those in authority. **Vs 3** says, "This (*that is, praying for unbelievers and those in authority*) is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
1. **Vs 2** confirms that God wants His people to live in an environment that is safe and secure, and that enables us to live a tranquil, quiet life in all godliness and dignity.
 2. And **vs 3** confirms that God wants more children who will not only be given the gift of eternal life, but will also live according to the truth of what makes life worth living.
 3. Therefore, it is for both reasons that we want to have a godly attitude toward, speak about, and pray for unbelievers and all those in authority.

III. Conclusion

- A. [5] For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave Himself as **a ransom for all**, the testimony given at the proper time.