

1 Timothy 2:1-6 *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior; <sup>4</sup>who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

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## **Announcements:**

1. Book Club: 7/14 5:30 Gentle & Lowly

## **1 Tim 2:1-6 | Independence Day**

On this Independence Day, it seems appropriate to pause from our march through the book of Ephesians and consider this nation which is our home. First it is appropriate because we'll likely have a small gathering today and I don't want our church to miss a bit of our time in Ephesians. Secondly because on July 4th this is what we're thinking about anyway and therefore we should think about it in biblical terms and quickly at that, before some other narrative swoops in and takes us over!

The Bible is not silent regarding the state and our relationship to it. Throughout scripture we see over and over again that the nation is a real thing. Just like marriage is real, not a mere social agreement, and just like the families that form around those marriages are real, not just biological coincidences. The world around us is structured most fundamentally in terms of relationships and one of those real relationships which frames our life is the nation.

It is typical of God to speak in terms of nations, bring judgement against nations, give mercy and blessings to nations. We even see something like angelic representation of particular nations, as in the book of Daniel, when the angel sent to Daniel is delayed because of interference by the "prince of the kingdoms of Persia" (Dn 10:13), which is a reference to the angel of Persia. Don't worry, Michael the archangel and representative of Israel stepped in. I know this raises more questions than it answers, but...

Here's my point, we might expect scripture's understanding nations to be merely arbitrary temporary human affairs without consequence. But that's not what we find. There is something about the nation and your relationship to the nation that is a real part of the Christian life. And like the other relationships in your life you have a particular obligation towards it, and it requires a particular action for your nation which is demanded of Christians. Prayer.

## 1. Type of Prayer

*1 Timothy 2:1-2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*

Paul urges Timothy in this letter towards prayer, and we should note first of all that his call to prayer is a universal one. Paul calls Timothy to pray for *all* people. But in this universal call is a particular call to pray for kings and all in high positions. That means we don't just pray for everyone generally but we pray for kings, as kings. We pray for their leadership and authority, and for their justice, for these people by definition impact more people than those who are not in their position of authority. And their position of authority is both connected to and *is* our experience of the state's authority.

The prayers we are to pray are characterized by four terms: supplication, prayer intercession and thanksgiving.

Supplication is asking for particular needs. For a head of state this might be for patience or discernment, sober-mindedness and justice.

Prayer, well that's simple enough, but it implies bringing these particular requests before the Lord. So that we are not praying in a non-Christian way, but in a particularly Christian way. It is common to think that there is justice as a value that exists and then God (thankfully) takes on this value of justice. But that isn't the story the Bible gives us. There is no such thing as justice outside of God. This means that we are asking King's to not just generically consider justice but to consider justice that looks like the Lords.

Intercession, is to boldly appeal to God on behalf of the leaders who are over us. This implies a type of identification with those who are over us so that we might appeal to God on their behalf for God to show his mercy. This means we don't pray disinterestedly for the leaders of our country, nor do we pray adversarially, but we pray in identification with them on their behalf.

Finally we pray to give thanks for all people and therefore particularly for our leaders as leaders. It is at least a burdensome vocation and we ought to have gratitude for those who take it on. The outcome of this type of prayer is tucked right into this verse.

## 2. Outcome of Prayer

*1 Timothy 2:2b that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*

This is the good outcome that we are aiming at, that we might live a peaceful, quiet, godly and dignified lives. Notice it is not a revolutionary outcome. It is not for a particular overthrow, and Paul had good reason to pray for an overthrow, he was writing this letter imprisoned by a government hostile to Christianity. But he doesn't pray for a revolution, instead he prays for intercession which leads to a peaceful, quiet, godly and dignified life.

When the government is working most properly it is out of our affairs, we are left alone. It is easy to develop a sort of martyr complex with relation to your nation, some people seem to covet the godlessness of society so that we might truly sacrifice for God in a purified church, but look at this prayer, and this next verse.

*1 Timothy 2:3-4 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

You see it is a good and pleasing thing in the Lord's sight for their to be peace in a nation. And not for no reason, peace serves this wonderful means to support the spread of the gospel. Here we see the heart of God laid out clearly in that he desires for all people to be able to know him. Now this of course raises the question, well then why doesn't he get that? And there are good answers to that question, namely that he doesn't only desire that. But we shouldn't gloss over the heart of God for people to be saved and the role the peace of a nation plays in supporting that.

### 3. Motive for Prayer

*1 Timothy 2: 5-6 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

Here is the fundamental motive for prayer for our nation. It is that our nation is under the one true God and King Jesus Christ, who gave his life so that we might be saved. This is the testimony which requires proclamation. And a peaceful place to proclaim advances the gospel. Here is the call beneath the call to pray for our nation, it is a call to love our nation. Not generically but specifically. To love the United States, because we are Christians and we live here. And because we love the United States we will pray for the United States and the leaders of our nation.

And by the way this loving of a nation is the way in which a nation becomes lovely. G.K. Chesterton notes this so well in his book *Orthodoxy*, he asks what to do about a place called Pimlico. A run down part of London. He says in order for Pimlico to become great, someone must first love it.

“People first paid honour to a spot and afterwards gained glory for it. Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her.”

We have the same call to love the place we are in, and to pray for it. Is this not what Christ has done for us? Is this not the message that we proclaim to the world? That you while yet unloveable, we're loved by the highest love there is, and afterwards became lovely. Love the United States. Pray for our country. Give thanks for the ease with which we might advance the gospel in her. Ask that this would continue to be the case. Don't underestimate all that goes into a peaceful quiet godly and dignified life.