

PRAY FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS



I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior....

— 1 Timothy 2:1-3

Even if we don't like the way things are going in our government, we *must* obey the apostle Paul's

exhortation in First Timothy 2:1-3 to pray for our governmental leaders. Before you dismiss Paul's instructions to pray for those in authority as too simplistic, remember that he lived at a time of grossly immoral governmental leadership and that he ultimately was martyred by Nero — the very "king" he asked people to pray for! In First Timothy 2:1-3, Paul declared, *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior...."*

Paul gave us six prayer commands in these verses that God expects us to obey — regardless of who is calling the shots politically. In this passage of Scripture, he clearly defined guidelines for us to follow when we pray. Rather than rush to God with accusations, complaints, grumbling, protestations, and whining, we are to follow the positive approach in prayer Paul provided. He began by saying, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, *supplications....*"

1. A Right Attitude

As Paul began to outline his instructions regarding how we should pray, he reminded us of the kind of attitude we ought to have when we draw near to God. Before we utter a single word in prayer, we must clearly understand in our hearts that we have been

afforded a *great privilege* to access the throne room of God. Regardless of the thoughts swirling around in our minds or the complaints we may be harboring in our souls, we need to come into God's presence with hearts of *respect* and *gratitude*. The first thing we need to do when we prepare to pray for our government is *get our attitudes right*.

2. A Prayer of Personal Consecration

Paul affirmed that our first responsibility as believers before we ever utter a request or a complaint regarding others — *before we utter anything else at all* — is to enter the presence of God and get our own attitudes and thoughts right before Him. Then with clear hearts we can receive *His thoughts* and know *His ways* in the place of prayer. When our own attitudes are corrected and realigned, it usually changes the way we pray concerning others, because our words reflect the Father's heart instead of our own personal preference or opinions.

Everything must be surrendered to God and the power of His Spirit before anything else is spoken to Him in prayer.

3. A Prayer of Intercession for Others

Once a believer has dealt with his own wrong attitudes and his need of consecration, Paul wrote what to do next. He said, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, *intercessions*...." Perhaps you sense the Holy Spirit's leading to pray for someone who is unable to pray for himself, such as a novice believer who simply doesn't know how to pray effectively, or for a government leader whose spiritual condition and unwise decisions are negatively affecting masses of people. In other words, you sense the Holy Spirit's leading to assume an *intercessory position* and to focus your prayers toward a specific individual or situation. And if you have made sure your own heart is clear of clutter, you can pray for others in this way while remaining free from any selfish agenda or wrong attitude.

4. A Prayer of Thankfulness

Paul continued in his list of prayer guidelines by saying, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and giving of thanks....*”

Let’s be honest — it’s difficult to be grateful and thankful when you are harboring a complaining attitude at the same time! God knows this. So He instructs you to allow thankfulness to flow from your heart, which will literally shift your “inner atmosphere” during your time of prayer.

So, before you start griping about a political leader — or anyone else for that matter! — first take time to think of reasons you can be thankful regarding that person. This will change your tone and make you more effective in prayer. And rest assured — *God will appreciate your change of attitude!*

5. A Prayer for Everyone

Paul continued, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, *be made for all men....*” The word “all” means we are not to show favoritism or to be picky about the people we pray for. Regardless of their spiritual status or political affiliation, we are to pray for “*all men.*” This is a good test, because if there is someone you think you can’t pray for, it probably indicates a problematic attitude inside you that needs to be consecrated to God. This is very important to understand, because your inability to pray for someone actually reveals a deep need for change in *you*.

6. A Prayer for Governmental Officials

Next, Paul said that we must pray for “*for kings.*” If anyone needed prayer, it was the unsaved kings who possessed lofty positions of power and authority in the First Century AD! But Paul broadened the scope of this divine command by saying that we are to pray for *all* who are “in authority.” This means all elected officials. It also includes, your Pastor, and your Boss on the job. Ponder that for a moment. That means we are to pray for *all* prominent governmental officials — *even* those whom we don’t care for at all! Paul told us the reason for all this praying is “...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior....”

Most believers in New Testament times had no option to vote, so they did what they *could* do and followed Paul's six prayer commands. I'm sure if they had been given the right to vote, they would have rushed to the polling booths to cast their votes. But the only vote they could cast was in prayer — so they prayed! Since their governmental leaders were entrenched in power and there was nothing they could do to change it, these early believers took their role in prayer very seriously. And ultimately the power of those prayers brought about change far greater than any election day could ever produce!

Remember — our democratic system allows us to vote, and we must exercise this cherished right. But once the election is over, we have to face the fact that the men and women who have been placed in positions of power are there because of the democratic system that elected them. They represent the choice of the people who put them there. If we are unsatisfied with the outcome, our opportunity is coming again a few years down the road to change the situation. Yet even so, our greatest effectiveness will be found as we enter God's presence in the authority of Jesus' name and fulfill these *six prayer commands* given by the Holy Spirit to the Church through the apostle Paul!

Father, I cherish the right to vote. It is a freedom that cost the lives of many. At the appointed time, I will exercise that privilege to make my voice heard via my voting ballot. However, I realize that I don't have to wait for an upcoming election to cast my vote for righteousness. I take my place in prayer, in obedience to Your Word, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, and I pray with all manner of prayer and supplications. Seated together with Christ Jesus and by the authority of His name, I pray with confidence according to Your will, knowing that You hear me.

I pray this in Jesus' name!