

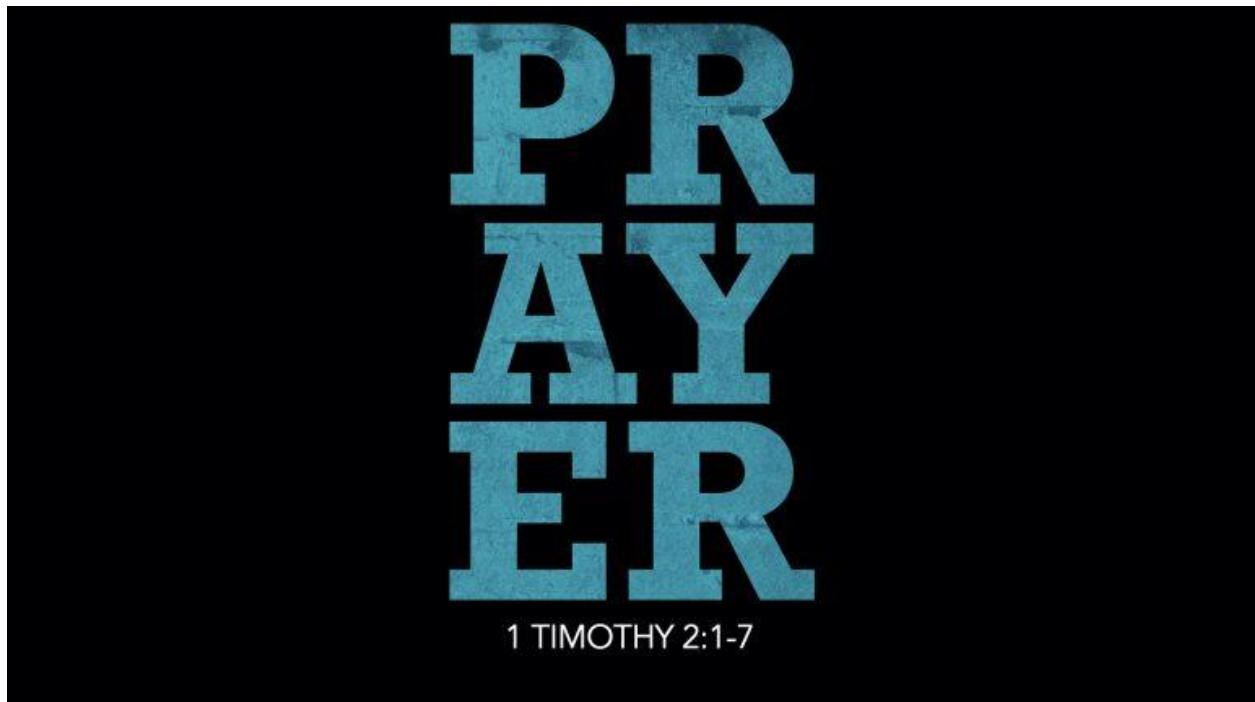


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1 Timothy Bible Study (Faith Foundations)

1 Timothy 2:1-7, A Praying People

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We are in the midst of a series called Faith Foundations. The apostle Paul is writing to Timothy about how the people of God are supposed to act. The greatest foundation for our faith is the fact that Jesus came to save sinners. This truth is what changes how we live.

Pray (2:1-2)

Paul says in 2:1, “First of all.” Based on all the information Paul has written in chapter 1, then this is what first thing we need. Paul urges that all kinds of prayers be offered for all kinds of people. Rather than being caught up in useless speculations and fruitless discussions (1:4,6), we are to be a praying people. We have looked at various descriptions about how we are a kingdom of priests as God’s people (cf. Revelation 1:6; 5:10; Isaiah 61:6). One of the most important ways we function as priests to the world is through an active prayer life. Notice that Paul says we are making petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving for all people. We are praying for everyone. We are praying for God to give time for people to repent. We are praying for God to show mercy. We are praying for people to turn their hearts to the Lord.

In this way, we are given one of our more difficult commands as the people of God: pray for your enemies (Matthew 5:43-44). Paul says to pray for everyone. There is no one excluded from the list of people we are to pray for. So we need to consider our prayer life. The people of God are people who pray for everyone, even their enemies. It is the best response we can have to our enemies. Prayer is what we need to do for someone who hurts us or is an enemy to ourselves or to God. God’s people are to be a praying people, even for enemies.

Further, Paul wants us praying for our government leaders. Paul says to pray for those who are kings and in authority. We should consider what this would have looked like in the first century. Paul would have been instructing Christians to pray for Emperor Nero Caesar. This would mean praying for Herod Agrippa, king of Judea. This would also mean praying for the various governors and procurators in the Roman Empire, like Felix and Festus. So when Paul proclaims this, he is not talking about government leaders that people would like nor people that would be favorable to Christianity. Paul was not praying for a democratic government. Paul was not praying for a capitalist economy. Paul was not praying for a government or economic system that was like the one we have in America. Yet Paul says to pray for them.

Notice Paul does not say that we pray for our leaders only when we agree with them. Paul does not say that we pray for our leaders only when they are godly. Paul does not say that we pray for our leaders only if we voted for them or wanted them in power. In fact, it would be reasonable to consider that our prayers should increase all the more if we are not pleased with what our leaders are doing.

In our circumstance, we will be praying for our presidents, our congressional leaders, our governors, our county leaders, and our city leaders. Not only these, but we are also praying for world leaders. When we start thinking about praying for those who are in authority in our world, there are a lot of world leaders, national leaders, state leaders, county leaders, and city leaders. As Christians, our prayers are to have a

global perspective and a global reach. What in particular are we supposed to be praying about regarding our government leaders? We are to pray to that we may live peaceful and quiet lives, godly and dignified in every way. We are praying that we can practice our faith with complete devotion to the Lord without interruption or disturbance.

Now if Paul is telling us to pray that we can live quiet and peaceful lives, then as Christians we are supposed to be living quiet and peaceful lives. We are to be known as peacemakers not troublemakers. Not only this, but notice that it is our prayer that we would be able to live in a way that shows dignity and total devotion to God. We are to be respectful and respectable. We remember that our allegiance is not to this country or to this world. Our allegiance is to God and we show people this is how we talk and how we live. We are not caught up in the affairs of this world. Rather than being activists in the world, we are actively praying for God's activity in this world. God rules over this world and the affairs of this world. The God who rules over the world wants his people to pray for the world. We pray for our world so that Christ can be displayed. The focal point of prayer is the gospel and pointing to Jesus. This is important because otherwise we will lose the focus that God has. Look at verses 3-4.

God's Desire (2:3-4)

Notice in verse 3 that this is what God desires. Being a praying people who are praying for the right things is what God desires and is pleasing to him. This should be notable to us. Prayer is not optional. Nor is prayer something that is good for us. A proper prayer life is pleasing to the Lord. Think about this: praying is one of the most important things God's people can do. Not is the prayer of the righteous powerful (James 5:16), praying for everyone, including our leaders, is pleasing to the Lord.

We are praying for the ability to live quiet and peaceful lives with all dignity and godliness because God wants all people to be saved. God wants all people to come to the knowledge of the truth. This is what life is all about. Think about this: there is not one person that God does not want to be saved. There is not one person that God does not love that he did not give his Son for that person. This is God's focus. Again, it is not being caught up in the affairs of the world or of our country. The goal is to not have a great country, great state, or great city. The goal is to have people come to the knowledge of the truth. We cannot be distracted from this goal. We are praying for societal circumstances that allow for the gospel to be spread because God wants all people to be saved. We need an atmosphere of peace and quiet living so we can teach the gospel. We are praying for God to be glorified as people come to the knowledge of the truth.

But what Paul says here is important for our consideration. Paul says that people need to come to the knowledge of the truth. This has a number of implications. First, this means we do not start with a knowledge of the truth. We need to come to this knowledge. We do not begin with it. This means that our values, culture, way of thinking, background, and teachings that we start with in life are all wrong, unless those things are grounds in the word of God. This is hard to admit and hard to see in ourselves. Part of our life work is to eliminate everything in our way of thinking and life perspective that does not match God's teachings. We must come to the knowledge of the truth. We do not start there, no matter how we were raised or taught.

Second, since we are to come to the knowledge of the truth, this means that there is no such thing as "my truth" or "your truth." I have an opinion and you have an opinion. But there is just one truth. Our

opinions are not truth. There is truth and we must never talk in a way that acts like there is such a thing as multiple truths based on our point of view. We can believe whatever we want but that does not make it true. I can believe in unicorns but that does not make them true. I can believe the sky is pink but that does not make it true. Truth does not change. Truth is absolute. We all have a point of view and then there is the truth. We must set aside our points of view and come to the knowledge of this singular truth established by God.

God's Response (2:5-7)

God desires all people to come to the knowledge of the truth. What is the truth? There is one God and there is one mediator between God and people, the man Jesus Christ (2:5-6), who gave himself as a ransom for all. This is the truth. There is God and there is one God. We need a mediator between us and this holy God. This mediator is Jesus who gave his life for us. The one who can stand before God on our behalf is Jesus, with his perfect life offered as a sacrifice of atonement on our behalf. It is this truth that must control our lives. Jesus gave himself for you and that changes everything about you and how you look at life and other people.

Jesus is described as the ransom for all people. The idea of a ransom is a price paid to set someone free from enslavement or captivity. We were captive to our sins. Jesus gave himself to be the price paid to set us free from our sins. This is the truth we can never forget. This is what Paul is saying in verse 7. He was appointed to be a preacher and an apostle of this good news to the world. This is the truth that controlled his life. As he noted in chapter 1, this is what changed him from being a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. Jesus' perfect patience toward him overflowing with grace is what changed him. It is seeing Jesus as our ransom that is to lead us to pray for all people as God's priests in the world. We are offering petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving for all people and for all in authority because God desires to save all people like he saved you and saved me.

Therefore, our mission is to pray for the ability to practice our faith in peace, living quiet and godly lives, showing respect and dignity while declaring to the world that Jesus gave himself so all would be reconciled to him. This is good and pleasing in the sight of God: that we are a praying people for all people.

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