

Praying for the Lost

What do the Holy Scriptures contain about praying for the lost? It would be good to begin by examining some passages related to the matter:

1. *Psa. 34: 15-16 "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. "*
2. *Psa. 66:18 "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*
3. *Psa. 109: 7 "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin."*
4. *Prov. 15: 8 "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight."*
5. *Prov. 15:29 "The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."*
6. *Prov. 28: 9 "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."*
7. *Jn. 9:31 "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."*
8. *Jn. 17: 9 "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."*
9. *1 Ped. 3: 10-12 "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."*
10. *1Ped. 4:18 "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"*

A careful consideration of these biblical texts should lead any sincere person who respects divine judgment to the simple and inescapable conclusion that God does not accept neither the sacrifice nor the prayer of the unbeliever. Therefore, this raises the question; is it lawful to pray for the President of the United States? There are many believers (so-called) that advocate praying for individuals in high political offices. Does the Word of God command us to pray for them so that he, in some way help and bless them despite their unbelief and despite the unjust and immoral laws they support? This article will examine what the Bible says about this question.

The passage that is often quoted to support this contention is found in 1 Timothy 2: 1-4. *"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 Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." At first glance, it seems that the Apostle Paul commands us to pray to God for political figures regardless of how corrupt they are. But if their destiny is to be damned without any hope of salvation, does He still want us to pray for them for our own benefit? Those who know how to handle the blessed Word should know that it is not good to isolate any text from a greater and broader context to make it collide with others that emphatically teach just the opposite. They should also know that when this happens, the need to reconcile one with the other will be necessary to avoid any embarrassing discrepancy.

The Son and Secular Politics

In Luke 20: 19-26, the Master responds to the chief priests and scribes regarding the tribute saying, *"...Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's."* In simple terms and without going into profound details, the Master ordered that his disciples (because they are in the world), should give to the secular government what it is required of them for the operation of the same, that is, without forsaking their main duty to grant God what corresponds to the covenant. Of course, the ministry of the Son is above any political system with its demands, and especially when it contradicts or prevents the performance of Christian duty (Acts 5:29). Therefore, our due service to the government is limited to the demands of the New Testament.

In a surprising example, the Master pointed to King Herod in a contemptuous way in Luke 13: 31-32 which relates the following, *"The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."* The fox represents the individual that is destructive and works with expert dissimulation. In other words, the Lord implied that King Herod only served to obstruct the Will of God. So "Herod" represents individuals in eminence that hide their true intentions and purposes because, although they may pretend to care about religion, they use their position to undermine Christ's ministry. *Songs 2:15* says, *"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines..."* Herod's high seat made him look worthy of praise even though his true character was wicked and idolatrous. Read also *Acts 23: 3*. This being the case, and knowing man inwardly, I do not believe that the Master would instruct his disciples to entreat the Lord in his favor.

Cornelius the Centurion

The conversion of the Gentile Cornelius is an exceptional example because it represents the first conversion of the unbelieving Gentiles who were judged worthy to hear the gospel. To justify prayer for unbelievers, many lay people, lacking expertise in the discernment of the law of God are always ready to emphasize the fact that before his conversion, Cornelius prayed and God heard him; Acts 10: 1-4, *"Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."* Isolating this passage seems to give every reason to those who say that God hears the transgressor's prayer despite the other biblical quotes that teach the opposite. So what is to be

done with this apparent contradiction? How should it be explained to the satisfaction of those on both sides of the coin?

First, the exceptional nature of this conversion must be noted. Acts 15:14, "*Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.*" The text describes the account as "the first visitation of the Gentiles by God." Of course, it refers to the first time that God visited Gentiles to convert them to Christianity. Along with this calling, Acts 10:44 points out that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit before being baptized. Before this conversion, the usual sequence was for people to convert first and then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, (Acts 2:38; 19: 5-6). However, the first Gentile converts received it before being baptized.

It should also be noted that Cornelius was a man that possessed godly qualities, was a devout person and charitable while also seeking the Lord. Regarding this man, Acts 10: 2-4 states, "*A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always...*" These works placed him as a prime candidate for the opportunity to hear the gospel of salvation. His conversion teaches us that although he was devout and obviously believed in God to some degree, he was not yet saved. Had he rejected the Spirit's call to hear the word and receive baptism, he would have perished the same as the worldly and incredulous.

(Read also verses 30-32). God does not convert any person today in the same manner. Everyone else has to be converted in the conventional way. Furthermore, God had already promised that his House would be a house of prayer for all nations! This particular conversion had to be extraordinary so that all Israel would acknowledge that under the NT regime, both the Gentile and the Jew would have part in the kingdom of Christ. The preacher's obligation is simply to preach the word, however, "*God gives the increase*", (1 Cor. 3: 6). Therefore, it must be concluded that the example of the conversion of Cornelius does not serve as a generic example to justify prayer for unbelievers, nor to support the belief that God hears their prayers.

The Church of Corinth and Lydia

Acts 18: 8-11 "*And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*"

Anyone without mature knowledge in the word could be prone to conclude that the Corinthians' conversion also serves as an example that proves that God hears the prayers of the unconverted. First of all, I point out that these were not converted in an unprecedented way like Cornelius and his household were. It was not necessary to reconfirm the calling of the Gentiles to the gospel. That had already been done! However, to describe the ideal attitude and perfect disposition of the individual of "good soil" according to the Parable of the Sower, the Spirit describes many of the Corinthian residents as "God's people," (See also, Jhn. 10:16).

At Philippi, "... *the Lord opened Lydia's heart so that she would be attentive to what Paul preached*" so that she would be converted (Acts 16:14). What message are we supposed to take from these examples? Simply, that the people of Corinth and Lydia were not hardened by unbelief, but possessed the perfect frame of mind and disposition of heart required of all men ready to accept the gospel of salvation. There are just so many hard-hearted and closed-minded people in the world that will never accept the gospel truth! (Cf., Mt. 7: 6). These types of

individuals are not candidates for the reception of the gospel. Therefore, if these examples of conversion serve as proof that God hears the prayers of unbelievers today despite the texts we considered at the beginning, these examples are teaching too much.

Disputes among Christians

1 Corinthians 6: 1 records; *“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?”* The expression “go to law” is one word in the koine Greek. It is the term *krino* (kree’no), which means, to distinguish, decide and determine among other significations. The English term for “unjust” is *adikos*, which means *treacherous* as opposed to the term “saints”, meaning *hallowed* and implying a ceremonial condition of blamelessness. Just as the world outside the church has its courts, so does the church. However, ecclesiastical matters must not be delivered up to the treacherous to judge for they know not the Lord nor his ways! Why should the church consult the dead on behalf of the living? *“...Shouldn't people ask their God for help instead? Why should they ask the dead to help the living? They should go to the teachings and to the written instructions. If people don't speak these words, it is because it doesn't dawn on them”* (Isa. 8: 19b-20). More and more, it appears that if anyone outside the sphere of the redeemed (the church), is deemed worthy to receive salvation, the Lord himself will provide the means for them to hear and will be given the opportunity to choose whether to follow or not; for only He “giveth the increase.” Wouldn’t it then be seen as a contradiction for the believer to pray for the treacherous seated upon worldly judicial tribunals given their nature to betray traditional gospel standards, customs and values?

Paul's Longing

Romans 10: 1 *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”* It should be noted first that the term “prayer” has many different meanings and uses in the Bible. As it can mean from a simple request, a ceremonial supplication, desire or longing, to encompassing the entire worship service. What is important, is how it is used contextually. Context is the final deciding authority that determines the precise meaning of the term. The question here is, how did the apostle Paul use the term in Romans 10: 1?

Contrary to all that has been examined before in this article, is the apostle's message that Christians are mandated to pray for the lost despite what we know of their overall attitude toward God and the gospel? Paul is not indirectly commanding us to pray for the unsaved, because in that case this passage would contradict what we already know about the condition of the unconverted sinner. What this text is saying is that Paul lived with the *desire* and *hope* that all of Israel would be saved. This thought is in accordance with the meaning of the term prayer in its most basic sense and without contradicting the Spirit’s broader message under consideration in the article; namely, that the Lord does not command the believer to pray for the lost. However, there is nothing wrong with wanting that the entire world be saved by the recognition of the Son and his gospel. Bring to remembrance the words of the prophet Ezekiel in Eze. 18:23 which says, *“Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?”* But, whether the text supports that we pray for the unconverted unbelievers, that does not fit within God's attitude towards such a rebellious generation.

Love Your Enemies

Matt. 5:44 *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"*

Anyone attempting to take this passage literally, is forced to do the same with the entire Sermon on the Mount. Needless to say, no one does. What we have here is a spiritual model of the nature of Jesus' gospel that will serve as the spiritual guide for Christians of the new dispensation; the Age of Christianity. The particular passage in question, is simply the perfect definition of the expression of agape love, otherwise called "charity." This type of Christian love is represented by the proclamation of the gospel to all, "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The gospel is also the expression of God's love to anyone in the world that chooses to submit to its tenets. Verse 45 of this same chapter explains; *"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."* The gospel is not only for those who treat us favorably! Indeed, just as sunshine and rain discriminates not between the just or the unjust, the Lord's gospel is for all.

The Christian and Civil Government

1 Ped. 2: 13-18 *"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."*

This portion of scripture commands the believer to submit to the law of the land for the good of the Lord's kingdom in order to preserve its integrity in the eyes of the world. Note that even here, Peter does not teach that its part of Christian duty to pray for secular officials to whom they must be subject.

Old Testament Figures

Jer. 29: 1 "Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon..."

Jer. 29: 4-10 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto

you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD. For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."

Ezra 6: 8-10 "Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons."

Without a doubt, these accounts reflect two exceptional periods related to God's people. In Jeremiah's case, the prophet pronounces the divine decree that Israel would be taken into captivity. At this critical moment, the Lord gives certain instructions to the people related to their stay in the country of their captivity. Israel was entering a stage of vanity, since God Himself had given them over to the king of Babylon. The people would live their days in captivity until the end of the period of their detention designated by God through Jeremiah. The Lord Jehovah gave these instructions to the people to rid their minds of any illusions they could entertain, such as that He might suddenly turn back their captivity to return them to their former land. At that time there were false prophets that contradicted God's decree attempting to convince the people that they had not sinned against Him, and that their present misfortune would very soon end, speaking nothing but flattery, as we see in the following texts; Jeremiah 14:13; 23:17. The people would not come out of captivity until the divine sentence of 70 years had passed, (Jer. 29:10; Dan. 9: 2; Zech. 7: 5). This tells us that the instructions God gave to Israel were provisional in nature, not permanent instructions. They were only for the time of his sojourning in Babylon and would cease at the end of his captivity. Therefore, it is not the purpose of this example to give license to the NT believer to make supplications to God for secular leaders of the world.

In the case of Ezra, God's remaining people who came out of captivity returned to their land and began the hard work of restoration. With the help of God, and with the gracious concessions of King Darius, the people managed to get the necessary materials for the work of rebuilding the temple for the restoration of ceremonial worship. The text does not say that the Jews received the recommendations of King Darius by divine order, nor can it be proven that they did as the king desired.

Why then does Paul order that we pray for those who are in eminence? Since the Word makes it extremely transparent that the prayer of unbelievers is an abomination to God, and knowing the implications of such a statement, how should the text in 1 Timothy 2: 1-4 be interpreted? *"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 Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."*

It would be worthy to acknowledge that this scripture resembles Jeremiah's exhortation, *"And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."* Furthermore, the spiritual condition that Jeremiah describes would one day loom over God's people in the last days; 1Thess. 5: 1-3 *"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."* Compare this passage with the following text:

Jer. 6: 13-14 *"For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."*

Jer 8: 10-11 *"Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."*

The Condition of the Church

We must recognize that similar perilous days would fall upon the Church. 2Tim. 3: 1-2 *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ..."* Furthermore, the Master warned us about this danger in Luke 21: 34-36; *"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."*

Since at the time the church received the charge to pray for those in eminence, the church had not yet reached the peak of doctrinal perfection, the apostle directs the men who lead the worship service to pray constantly for the church's ministers so that they would not yield to the deceitfulness of sin for fear of leading the entire church astray. It was also Paul's hope that the church would not be seduced by false brethren whom he knew would arise in the last days. Although the Spirit did not yet manifest the church as captive in the sense of being under the bondage of human opinion, nevertheless, the same condition of danger to succumb to false guidance loomed over her as in the days of the prophet Jeremiah should the church hearken to the voice of false brethren who would deny the fact that the people were in danger of going into captivity because of disobedience and neglect of the covenant (2 Pet. 2: 1).

Not all preachers have been faithful in their interpretations of the divine mysteries contained in the gospel. The Spirit warns very early and incessantly about the danger of placing all trust upon the arm of man. Throughout the Scriptures, there are many figures that depict the failure of men in high places.

Here are some examples:

- Jer. 17: 5 *"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD."*
- Psa. 62: 9 *"Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity."*
- Psa. 146: 3-4 *"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."*
- Act. 20: 29-30 *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."*
- Psa. 82: 1, 6-7 *"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."*

In addition to these passages, the Holy Spirit describes judges charged with ruling among the people as "gods," just as Psalm 82 describes them. A god or judge represents an individual in a position of eminence among God's people. Exodus 21: 6 says, *"...Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever."* Also Exodus 22:28, *"Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people."* The term "judges" is translated *el-o-heem* ' in Hebrew and is the same word found in Genesis 1: 1 *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* The term "God" is also *Elohim*, that is, Gods, in the plural sense. However, in Genesis it is not translated judges, but God. Just as God's people in the OT had judges who judged in place of, or in favor of God, there are also judges in the NT. However, in the NT these gods or judges are the leaders of the church, (preachers).

So, it was because of the danger that preachers themselves would indulge in greed and the lusts of the flesh (human opinion), that Paul commanded us to pray for them. There cannot be a more logical explanation for the directive to pray for those in eminence! We have no example in the Word where the Master or any of his apostles prayed specifically for the unbelieving leaders of the secular government of their own time!

Higher Powers

As concerning the higher powers, many believe that the Apostle Paul dedicates the 13th chapter of Romans to the exhortation of the church in all ages regarding its duty toward secular civil law. The truth is that Paul's reference to these dignities compose another subject separate from the men in high places of 1 Timothy 2: 1. Rom 13: 1-7 says, *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."*

It is undeniable that the text has a carnal appearance and application and that, on the surface, the text affirms the same thing the Master pointed out in Luke 20: 19-26, however, the discourse bears a greater spiritual application. After pointing out the need to submit to the authorities, he begins from verse 8 to point out how this mandate is related to the fulfillment of the spiritual law of Christ. But what does respect for civil ordinances have to do with awakening from sleep and rejecting the works of darkness? Was the church asleep and not recognizing its duties toward political and civil ordinances? Since the Spirit changes the direction of the subject to speak out against hidden practices described as darker *spiritual* dangers, this forces us to examine the commandment through another perspective; that is, through a spiritual point of view.

A. The higher powers of 2 Peter 2:10 (KJV)

1. *"But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."* Instead of "dignities" the Jubilee Version translates "higher powers", the Faithful Version translates "divine powers", and the International Standard Version translates "glorious beings." And there are other different translations as well. The term "afraid" is the Greek vocable "*tremo*" which means, to tremble. *Isa 66:2b* says, "...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." It should be a well-known fact that the Lord's full authority rests only in the hands of the apostles of Jesus Christ. Only they have the power to loose and to bind on Earth those things pertaining to ecclesiastical law, (Matt. 16: 19; 18: 18). John 20:23 also adds, "*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*"

The word "government" refers to the established dominion which is the apostolic system of imposed ordinances as it is the duty of the entire church to be subject to their leadership (1 Cor. 11: 1; Php. 4: 9). Yielding to their authority equates yielding to Christ himself. Therefore, in light of what is revealed in this article, Romans 13 really has very little to do with obedience to secular civil and political authority and much to do with the spiritual governing body over the church.

2. Peter, is not condemning individuals that refuse to abide by civil laws, but false teachers that do not respect apostolic principles, traditions and values. Secular laws do not compose the system of beliefs that educate the believer to the awakening of his conscience towards the path of true love towards one's neighbor. So, is Peter speaking about an entirely different body of "higher powers" than that of Paul in Romans 13? No, but rather, they speak on the same subject, because they both deal with those who truly rule over the church, the ecclesiastical presbytery made up of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2: 20-22).

3. The future rebels of whom Peter predicted would enter the church would turn out to be the very church leaders that would apostatize and depart from the apostles' doctrine. These are they that did not continue in fellowship with the apostles manifesting their true nature as antichrists that, not only rail against dignities, but also deny the Father and the Son. John wrote to the sons of God regarding these apostates in 1 John 2: 18-19; "*Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if*

they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

B. Jude 1: 8

"Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities."

1. The Spirit affirms through Jude that those men about whom Peter prophesied are now present in the church according to his writing. Peter speaks in the future tense while Jude speaks in the present. Jude uses the same descriptions to point out the same men that Peter predicted would appear in the church, namely, "they despise dominion" and "speak evil of dignities".

2. These bear the signs of the antichrist, which is to deny the Father and the Son (v.4). Furthermore, they break the bonds they once had with the true apostolic doctrine. The apostle John adds that these fell out of fellowship with the apostles, in 1John 1: 3; 2: 18-19.

3. Hence, the Spirit directs the mind to the true meaning of the "higher powers" mentioned throughout the NT; this expression points to the apostles of Jesus Christ. So we conclude that although, Romans 13 can be used superficially to apply to civil laws, however, the greater spiritual application applies to the authorities established in the church; that is, the apostolic body.

Conclusion_

Considering what the Bible teaches regarding the condition of the unbeliever, the unfaithful and the unconverted, should anyone accept in good conscience that it is lawful to pray for them? Is it lawful to pray for treacherous natured men seated in political positions of power? To do so would go against the Will of God for nowhere in Scripture do we find justification for it, except if one takes 1 Timothy 2: 1 out of the broader biblical context and totally ignores the spiritual perspective of the text.

Granted, this is not an easy matter to understand, or to explain. And as a Christian I understand how difficult it may be to want to especially pray for loved ones that are unbelieving and not be allowed to do it. Bear in mind that the primary method of saving the lost is not by "inviting them to church", but to bear witness to them of God's truth. Preaching the Word to the lost serves as the manner in which the believer provides "intercession" for them; not by asking God for their salvation through prayer.

However, if for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ (the church), the believer suffers from certain circumstances created by the secular government, he can pray to God asking to be delivered from trial and affliction. However, everything has to be for the benefit of the ministry of the church and for the glory and honor of God. It must always be recognized that it is up to God to deliver or not, to allow the increase or not, etc., according to His will, as it is written in Daniel 2:21; 4: 17b *"And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding [...] to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men..."*

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Israel Y. Patiño