

Access: Prayer for the Nation  
1 Timothy 2:1-7; 2 Chronicles 7:14  
Sunday, July 7, 2024

- Introduction

As we leave the Fourth of July behind our thoughts naturally turn to matters of the nation, of patriotism and for Christians, prayer for the spiritual condition of the country. Some pastors turn to the passage we read from 2 Chronicles, about the Lord's people praying and the Lord healing the land. In our main passage for the day, we look at the call to pray for leaders, and everyone else, and consider how we are to pray. In fact, that is the real focus, I think, of the passage even though the "pray for people in authority" clause grabs our attention. For today let's focus on the fact that we have access to the Almighty and glean some ideas on how to approach Him from this passage.

- Set the Stage

1 Timothy is part of the pastoral epistles, written to Timothy and Titus as they served as pastor of their young congregations. Under the broad theme of "fight the good fight, run the race," the Bible give practical instruction on what to be and what to do as church, including following the lead of Jesus who is constantly praying for us, but constantly praying for others, including people in authority. This passage puts such an emphasis on prayer that it uses several different words for prayer, each with a different nuance, and what the Apostle Paul uses to begin the sentence puts all the emphasis on the importance of prayer, in all its forms, for peace in society.

- **Main Point:** prayer is of value, in all its forms, for peace in society (verses 1-2)

Exhort-(it is a matter of importance)

The passage begins with the word, "exhort." God exhorts us to take prayer serious, using several different words for prayer, each with a different nuance. The word for "exhort" means literally "to call near" or to gain the attention of someone in an important moment. Imagine a basketball game and one team has called a time-out. Both teams quickly huddle around the coach for strategy and encouragement. No one just stands around waiting for the time-out to end. There's something important happening.

- **Supplications**

The first word for prayer is supplications. Supplication is when we ask for things. In this passage it is in the middle voice(?) and has an element of begging to it. The root meaning is to bind oneself to someone, as if you are entreating someone and you have no other options. It is prayer like unto a high-wire act with no safety net. There is a dark story about the notorious dictator Joseph Stalin. He made many promises in his rise to power, but once he was at the top, he did not let promises stop him from ruthlessly clinging to power. He simply would not tolerate any criticism. Once, when a number of naval officers and sailors criticized Stalin's lack of concern for the people, he had them all arrested, tied to an old ship in the Volga River and sunk. I bring this up because the desperation felt by those sailors hints at a sort of desperation in supplication. As said before, there is an element of begging to it. There is a desperation to this type of prayer.

- **Prayers**

The net word is "prayers" although every word in this passage is a form of prayer. The word for "prayers" has an element of worship to it. It is to share a wish but to do so with the strong sense that the person receiving the wish deserves great honor. It is something that we do for our own good as well as what we owe to God.

- Intercessions

The next word is "intercessions" or praying for other people. The word for "intercessions" also means "interview." Learn as much about the person for whom you intercede as possible. The better you know, the better prepared you are to intercede. There's a story told by the late Richard Wurmbrand, a Lutheran minister who was held prisoner in a Communist prison for years before his release. During his confinement, Wurmbrand had a vision of sorts of a man kneeling to pray on his behalf. It was a vivid memory, and years later, he was introduced to a man in the United States who had been praying for him for years. It was the same man he saw in his vision. We do not know the impact, even on people on the other side of the globe, that praying has for people who are in need and are suffering. Intercession can change the direction of the lives of people whom we do not ever meet this side of eternity.

- With thanksgiving

The final word is "thanksgiving." The word for "thanksgiving" is the root word for our English word "eucharist." It is the awareness that we are well-favored, and thus should be grateful. We know that we are being treated with great grace.

- **Application:** Pray for everyone, including people in authority, that we may live in peaceful times, helpful in the spread of the Gospel. The native peoples of Alaska have a few dozen terms for “snow” indicative of the importance and presence of snow and ice in their lives. In this passage, having more than one term for prayer also indicates the importance and prevalence of prayer in a life well lived.

- **Conclusion**

Prayers for the nation are always needed. In fact, in our passage for today we see that while it is applied to leaders, everyone needs to pray and to be prayed for. The several words for prayer point to the different nuances, each shedding more light on the practice, and the importance of prayer in our lives always.