

A Church Prayer Guide, p.2

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Bible Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-8
Preached on: Sunday, June 2, 2019

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Well, take your Bibles and let's go back to 1 Timothy. We're in chapter 2 this morning. 1 Timothy 2. We've already started on this. I call this a prayer guide for the church. Now we're in this series of going through this pastoral epistle of 1 Timothy and we're calling this beautifying the bride because that's what the Apostle Paul is doing, he's writing to Timothy as Timothy has been left in Ephesus to oversee the church and to fix some things in the church. You know, the church needs fixing a lot. A matter of fact, you study the New Testament, the Apostle Paul spends the bulk of his energies fixing the church, um, and so he's telling Timothy, "Now as you stay there, these are the things I want you to deal with, to address, to get straightened out, to develop, whatever it might be so that Christ's local church which is his bride, may be the most beautiful that it can be." You see, the church exemplifies, it shines forth God's wisdom and God's power i.e. God's beauty to the world. The world should look on the local church and say, "Man, your God is special. Wow, your God is wonderful the way He's designed all this to work," and, um, so we want to strive as Grace Life Church of the Shoals and the now approaching 70 church plants and others around the world that we are mentoring and overseeing and helping, we want to strive that we do show forth God's wisdom and God's beauty, that we do things right here according to the word of God and, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. So this is a very important book to all of us, um, not any more important than the others but that it specifically addresses church life.

Now we come to 1 Timothy 2:1-8 where Paul talks a lot about prayer and there's some amazing truths that come together here. I just exhort you this morning to work hard in listening as I have worked hard studying and preparing for you. 2, 1 Timothy rather, chapter 2, beginning in verse 1.

1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority [or high positions], so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying)

as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

Now reviewing quickly, we talked about the fact that, again, this letter is addressed to a man who is to a, take the truths and address a local church. It's local church centered and remind ourselves again that we, like the Scriptures, make no apology for being strongly centered on God's local church as it is the centerpiece of God's purposes and God's glory for both time and for eternity. Let's remind ourselves for the 100th time, if not the 1,000th time, that the local church is not one of many ways you can serve God, it is the way you serve God. Everything else is to be connected to, an extension of, to complement, to be overseen by God's local churches. The esteemed Apostle Paul himself reported back to Antioch and the early apostles reported back to Jerusalem, the local churches there, for the oversight of their work and their ministries.

Now in chapter 1, Paul's already told Timothy, "Now, Timothy, I need you to confront, to exhort, to correct some men in the church there are Ephesus who began to teach false doctrines." They're taking Christian doctrine and, my, do we not have it in our day today, and they're putting a twist on Christian doctrine and they're making it something it's not. That sounds good, it looks right, it sounds like God's wisdom but it's not. Be discerning men of God. Know the difference between those who use the Scriptures but they don't preach the word. There's a big difference there. So he exhorts Timothy, "Fix this problem in the church and if those men who are teaching strange or unsound doctrine, who are putting a spin on the truth for man-centered purposes, if they'll not repent, they're to be excommunicated."

Now, I., continuing in our review, he says, "First of all, I want you to pray for all. Be praying for all." He says there in, ah, in verse 1, "on behalf of all men." He gives something of a dissection of prayer. He talks about the word "praying" and then he uses the word, an, "entreaties," then he uses the word "petitions," then he uses the word "thanksgivings," and, ah, these are all subunits of a whole. It's really kind of difficult to separate them out completely, they always connect together. So we see not everything that is taught in the Bible about prayer but a main treatise, if you will, or a main dissection of what our prayer life should be about.

Then, secondly, we talked about the direction of prayer. He said, "I want you to pray on behalf of all men." Now, again, this might have been quite a shocking thing to these believers in Ephesus; understand, they are suffering severe persecution under Roman Empire's control. They're, they're held captive, if you will, under the governance of Rome and the Caesars, Nero at this time, was not a good person. He was a cruel, vile, ungodly, immoral and wicked man. Among other things, he had his own mother murdered out of power and control issues in the Empire, and he, he's also violently persecuted the church. So they probably thought Nero's the antichrist, ah, that's the world, that's wickedness, we're, we're, concerned with the church and that's not wrong, by the way, it's just not completely in balance. So what I think Paul's doing, he's saying, "Let's get a balance here. Yes, Nero is evil. Yes, the Roman government is ruling in a wicked and vile way and

persecuting the church, but you're still to pray for them because a sovereign God has put you in this place at this time."

Can I remind you, church, that God can take a crooked ruler and draw a straight line? God can fulfill his perfect will through men or women who may be over us and governing authority who are not personally good people. Now if we can change it, let's change it. You get a chance to vote for somebody better, vote for somebody better but sometimes the options aren't very good. Can I get an amen there? They're just not very good.

Well, for the church at Ephesus, their options were not very good because they didn't get to vote so they just thought, this is what we got. The Apostle Paul said, "This is what you got so I want you to understand something, you have something powerful in your hands and in your hearts and that's prayer. Pray for all of these people."

Now, II., we talked about praying that the governing authorities would bring blessings upon the church. Now this is a powerful thing and you wouldn't believe the commentaries and scholars that really miss this point. Ah, ah, they miss the fact that this is the local church praying and one of our primary motives in praying for our governing authorities is that the church might be able to continue on without troubles, without molestations, without persecutions; that we might be able to serve God in the world the way God's told us to and they might just leave us alone. That's basically what he's saying here.

How does he word it here in our text in verse 2? He said, "I want you to pray," verse 2, "for kings and all who are in authority," or all in high positions, "that we," the church, "may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." In other words, just go on about what we're doing in tranquility and in quietness, that is, with, with a restful, peaceful spirit, not worried and concerned about who they gonna, who's door are they gonna knock on next, who are they gonna arrest next, who are they gonna persecute next.

So as I talk to you about, ah, sort of tongue-in-cheek why I voted for Donald Trump, this is one of the primary truths and that is that I, I, I wish we had a man with the personal morals of Billy Graham in office, but we didn't have that, we didn't have that option, so I looked for the man that is most likely to have the policies and the agenda that will leave the church alone and allow us to do what God's called us to do. That's a clear biblical principle. We're to pray to that end but understand Paul couldn't tell them, "When you go to the voting booth, vote to that end," because they couldn't vote. But that should be our conviction. I strongly, I respect but I strongly disagree with the brethren who came out during this last election and said since Trump's personal morals are so bad, at least in his past, I understand he claims he's changed a lot of things and I, we're to believe the best. He, he, I don't like some of his style. I don't like a lot of what he says and does, but his agenda and his administration lines up with biblical truth a whole whole whole lot better than any Democrat on the ticket. That's just the truth. I don't know how to say that any other way, and so we are much more likely to have the kind of judges appointed and the kind of laws and policies enacted under a President Trump that will allow the church to go on in tranquility and in quietness with reverence and godliness. That's what the verse

says. We're more likely to have that kind of an administration and that kind of, ah, functioning as a church under him than we would Hillary Clinton who boldly said the church must change some of its doctrine. I want Hillary Clinton to know something: she's not our Lord. She doesn't dictate our doctrine. She doesn't dictate what we believe and we live in a country that believes in freedom of religion. So there, there's that point and I've got a whole whole whole lot more to say about that but I'm not gonna say it now.

So as Paul tells Timothy, "Pray for governing authorities, pray with the good of the church as your primary motive." Did you hear that, church? Not even against abortion, though we should abhor abortion as Christians, of course we do. It's not just, look, the moral cleaning up of society, the bringing to bear of true justice in the culture is a concern of ours but it's secondary to the purpose of the church which is centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the saving of lost souls. We, we're, I believe a lot of the brethren are getting way out of balance here. They're flying their banner of superior righteousness and wisdom and spirituality by saying we're really to embrace these great big social movements, empowerment of women, etc. etc. etc., when I find not a thimble full of Scripture to support that. Sure, we're concerned about immoralities in the culture. Sure, we care about injustices in the culture, but when as long as you're in the world, you're gonna have some of that. We're to make sure we don't get out of balance and we stay focused on what is primary and that's the work of the church in a wicked world.

Is it not amazing Jesus and the Apostle Paul, the two prominent voices, if you will, for the church, didn't hardly at all address cultural issues? Just didn't come across their radar screen? But they with great thoroughness and emphasis, taught us about being the church in an unjust or unjust culture. Be the church in an immoral culture. Look, God is not – now listen to what I'm saying – God is not primarily concerned about cleaning up the world. Not yet. He's primarily concerned about building his church in the world. Now listen to me, and if that's done properly, it will have the best effect to clean up the world. But you can't get those backwards, you can't even make them parallels. One is primary, one is foundational, and the other is the byproduct. The church and the Gospel is primary, then we become the proper salt and light. Let me say it to you again. I've said it to you many times, 47,000 Southern Baptist churches, what if all 47,000 Southern Baptist churches had a man in the pulpit thundering the word of God in the power of the Spirit? What if all 47,000 Southern Baptist churches faithfully practiced a regenerate church membership, they didn't just let people jump through the hoops and be a part of God's church as if that's all it was involved in conversion? What if all 47,000 Southern Baptist churches actively practiced biblical church discipline, they didn't have whore-mongers and adulterers and homosexuals and everything else in the world on their church membership rolls? If all 47,000 Southern Baptist churches, we're not perfect, but we're striving to be biblical, we'd have a far far far greater impact on the culture for good than all the social movements we could possibly get involved in. That's where Paul's coming from, pray that the church would be right and then you will have the proper impact on the culture. Now this is not leaving out that God may lead some men to become legislatures and judges. I hope we have Christian men in those places and they work ardently in those positions for biblical righteousness and justice in the land. I'm for that 110%, but the church must not be diverted from her mission.

So Paul tells Timothy, "I want you to pray for all these people, particularly those people in authority," and again, that might be kind of strange to the believers at Ephesus because they, those people were trying to kill them sometimes. He said, "But pray to the end that the church may go on without the troubling, the molestations, the persecutions of the governing authorities."

I told you about how Tertullian, the second and third century church father, an esteemed early church theologian, how he prayed for and supported the Roman Empire with all of its wickedness, with all of its injustice. Why? Because he said that's better than any alternative I see so the church can be what it's called to be. Folks, you just can't get around this. It's clear in the word of God. Very very clear.

Now, so prayer is a good thing. Prayer is good for us. Prayer properly realigns things the way they're supposed to be. When you bow in prayer, you are the creature and he is your Creator. When you bow in prayer, you are humbled and he is exalted. When you bow in prayer, you acknowledge he is Lord and you are his servant. Prayer is good for us. Prayer is good for the church. It pleases our Lord, it's acceptable to our Lord. Look at verse 3, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." It's good for you to pray, in this context particularly, pray for governing authorities that the church can be left alone and prosper in the work God's called her to do in the world.

III. Now we come to new stuff. Pray for the building up of the church through evangelism. It's as if Paul is saying now certainly pray for these kings and all who are in authority, and in your case, and in our case, often that means men in authority, women in authority who are wicked, who are ungodly. Can you believe that politician after politician after politician in our country would give a positive sometimes even a celebratory spirited affirmation of killing unborn babies up to the moment of birth? It's just unbelievable to contemplate. I mean, you may have the most wicked of rulers but he says God can turn the king's hearts like rivers of water. Pray that the church will be benefited even though we do have wicked men running the country you're presently in, or women.

Now he shifts gears and he said one the greatest things that could happen for the good of the church is these folks in authority get saved. One of the greatest things that could possibly happen in your culture is those who have the power structures actually come to faith in Jesus Christ. So he begins talking about evangelism and we begin in verse 4, he says, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge," or you could say to the recognition, "of the truth." So Paul says to Timothy, "Timothy, as you lead the church, instruct the church to keep praying for all men, even the wicked rulers whom you have over you, to the end that some of them might be saved."

Now another thought here on living in a sinful world, I, when I as an early Christian without enough biblical understanding, I had a simplistic truth that maybe if there's a man in town and he had a business and I knew he was something of a rounder and he wasn't a very godly person, then I needed to avoid his business. Well, that, I wouldn't say that's

wrong but the Bible says you can't abandon association from wicked men because if you did that, you'd have to leave the world. Some of you men in business and other things, you have to have, ah, you buy and sell and have, and have, ah, ah, a social contact and business contact and interaction and association with the people who don't love Christ. It's a part of being in the world. As a matter of fact, when Paul talked about disciplining a Christian, he says, "I told you not to associate with any so-called brother who lives an immoral life." He said, "I did not tell you not to associate with the, the people of the world who live an immoral life because if you did that, you'd have to leave the world." So there is some of that. There's only two ways to avoid evil people or wicked people or ungodly people in the world. There's only two ways. You'll have to 1., either leave the world, or 2., win them to faith in Christ. That's the only way. Now we don't, we don't choose to run and socialize with those who are outwardly wicked but we have to have some association from time to time wherever you are in business, whatever.

I remember a businessman coming to me one time and he said, "My, my, my boss takes us to these dinners with these clients and they're drinking. I don't drink. I don't, but I'm not gonna beat that." I said, "No, you just, just do what you do and go home. Forget it." To avoid all of that, you'd have to leave the world. We understand that. Scripture teaches that. But Paul says, "Don't forget, be praying for those people in the world. Be praying for them."

He says in verse 4 because we serve a God, and notice how he says it here, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." In the context, this may include Nero. This may include that God might save others of the, of the governors in the Roman Empire. God's got a desire for all.

Now what I would remind you in, in the balance of biblical truth, when Paul says God desires all men to be saved, he is not saying God has decreed all men to be saved. If God decreed all men to be saved, that's universalism. If God decreed all men to be saved, then all men would be saved. You understand there's no shortage in the power of Jesus Christ to win every man on the earth to Jesus. There's no shortage of power in Jesus Christ to save every man on earth or every man on 100 earths. God desires that all men would recognize the truth that he's the only Lord and Savior, that all men would recognize that they're, they're sinful before this Triune and holy God, and they stand judged under this God. He said he's a God who desires that they see that and then see that Christ is their only hope and turn to him in repentance and in faith.

The application for us here is that we should also be praying this way. Our God desires this, we should be praying and pursuing all men to come to Christ for salvation. In other words, are you listening to me, individual church member? Are you listening to me? We're to be like our God. He desires all to be saved so at least we should desire all men to hear the Gospel. Never stop. Never quit. Never give up. If you've got a, a friend or a loved one or, or relative, a husband or a wife or whoever it may be and they don't know Christ, you must not quit. At least you can bombard heaven praying for God to save them. All of our small group classes, let's revive our efforts. As church elders and staff, we have a list of the lost that we pray for regularly. On Sunday morning we pray for

those we're aware of that God speak into the heart that may not be saved. I want to challenge our small group classes, update your prospect rolls. Put more people on it. Ask your class members, "Who do you know that's not saved?" At least we can pray for them. Would you meet me in that challenge, church? Can we renew our hearts to have the heart of God who desires all men to be saved? God's heart is, "I wish all would recognize their sin and My Savior as their only hope." I want to stir you to this. I want to challenge you to this and challenging Brother Jeff to this, and I'm challenging you to this.

God's heart and God's will are above us. God's heart and God's will is beyond our understanding. On the one hand, his love for man is such that he desires that all would recognize their sin and their need of Christ as Savior, but he's decreed that his elect will recognize it and repent and be saved. "Pastor, how do you balance those?" I don't have to. I balance them this way: my God is greater in his intellect and in his wisdom and in his understanding than I can ever comprehend. His ways are beyond finding out.

Romans 11:33-36 is a good reminder for us where the Apostle Paul, now you know where Paul's been in Romans, he's been talking about the sovereignty of God in salvation, the elect of God, and how all this works, and then he comes to this statement, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has know the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who," was first, or, or, "who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." It's just beyond finding out. God has a heart of love for all to recognize their sin, that they need a Savior, but – now listen to me – it's as if God sent his Son down here, his Son dies on the cross, he sets his Son before the world with nail-pierced hands and blood-stained hands and said, "Whosoever will may come," but no one comes. No one. And then God ordained and decreed, "I will have some that will come because My Son will receive the reward of His suffering. My Son will have the church, He'll have the bride He paid to get." God desires all to be saved. God decrees some will be saved. Our job – listen, church – is to pray for all, pursue all, present all with the Gospel, in this context, including those wicked rulers and authorities in our governments that we detest maybe their personal morality or lifestyle or whatever it may be, that God might even save them.

Now he goes on and amplifies with some glorious truths about our salvation. He continues on with, um, verse, um, 5, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," and here's the point: there's no other way to see a person changed than through God's one appointed way, through his Son, the mediator, the one who can connect sinful fallen man with the holy and righteous God. He's the one and only way. There aren't many ways to heaven, there are not many ways to God, there's one way. So he says, "Pray to God that men might know the one and only way." If there was another way to see your governing authorities or other men's hearts changed, we'd approach, we, we would seek that out too, but there's only one way seeing them come to faith in Christ.

Then in verse 6. I love these beautiful words that the apostle pulls out of the culture that we might get a deeper descriptive and understanding of salvation. Verse 6, "who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time." Jesus is the ransom for our sin. Listen to me carefully: Jesus did not pay the price for us, he became the price for us. He didn't just take out of what was at his disposal, he became the ransom. He died. He gave all to purchase us back. The ransom payment was payment so you would be free. He's paid the price that we might be freed from sin and Satan's domain and the ultimate consequence of being a sinner, eternal wrath and separation from God. He is the ransom payment.

Now Paul says here to Timothy, he's the ransom payment for all. Now if you go to seed on these phrases "for all" and say, "Well, this, this obviously teaches the Arminian doctrine, the Pelagian doctrine that all men everywhere have had their sins paid for," well, then Paul is, is a contradictory almost schizophrenically contradictory and that he has given us those weighty thorough teachings, Ephesus, ah, Galatians, ah, Romans and on and on about the sovereignty of God. I think what we need to remember and probably this side of heaven this is the best understanding we will have about how could he give a ransom for all but he only elected certain ones to salvation. When he says he gave himself a ransom for all, I hold to the position that his death is indeed sufficient for all. There's no lack of power in Jesus, as I said earlier, to cover 100 worlds full of sinners, but though his death was sufficient for all, it is only efficient, you might could say effective for the elect. How do we know who the elect are? They're those who believe. Those who do not believe will not have themselves ransomed, will they not? So in a sense, how could he be the ransom for all if some are not ransomed? Because that's not what the text is saying. It's teaching that beautiful, balanced, biblical truth that in one sense Christ is sufficient for all and we must proclaim to all, we must pursue all, we must tell all they can come and they should come to Christ, but we know in back of all of it in the sovereign mind of a holy, all-wise, all-powerful God it is only efficient for those who will place their faith in Jesus Christ. It will only have its proper outcome of saving those who believe on Jesus Christ. The point here is that on this human side, we can, we must pursue all men to come to Christ, in this context, even those wicked rulers in the Roman government.

Then he has that phrase in verse 6, "the testimony given at the proper time." Christ's death has power to save in any time but it was borne out, it was provided for at the divinely ordained time, a time that was established from the foundation of the world. But now it's happened. The testimony has been given. He did come. He has died. He was buried and conquered death, hell and the grave. He rose for our justification. He's ascended into heaven. That's all a historical fact. The testimony has been born. So the point is God's atoning saving work is fully accomplished, God's heart for sinners is laid bare and open. All should come. All should be prayed for. All should be pursued for salvation. In the context, including those wicked government authorities whom you may have previously said, "We don't have anything to do with them." Yeah, you do, you're to pray for them. You're to pray for them. The ransom is paid, there's nothing more to be done so God says to you, God says to all, "Come. Come." And we should pray that they come.

IV. May godly men lead the church in this prayer effort. May godly men lead the church in this prayer effort. In verse 8 the apostle says, "Therefore, based on all that I've told you about kings and in authority and you're to pray for them that the church may go on without harassment, without molestation from governing authorities, but you're also to be praying for them and for all men to come to the knowledge of the truth," now verse 8, "now I want men to lead in this." God has ordained headship in the home and God has ordained headship in the church to men, but notice the text, they should be godly men. They should be godly men.

Now you may have heard some of the discussion abounding in Baptist life today that women have been held back long enough, women need to have their voices, women need to have positions, and women need, need to be allowed to teach and preach to men etc. etc. etc. All I've got to say to you is God's word hasn't changed. Women are not a second class citizen in God's kingdom or in God's church but women do have a different role than men in God's kingdom and in God's church. We are not gonna follow the trends of this wicked, fallen, godless world where today, you know, here's what they.... No, I just go back in our culture a little bit. Years ago they kept saying legalize abortion, legalize abortion, legalize abortion. What about rape and incest? Rape and incest. Rape and incest. We legalize abortion. It's horrible. Women shouldn't have to bear a child if they've been raped or had incest. Well, God can give a woman grace to bear that child and love that child. It's happened thousands of times. But that was their argument and then they got it, did it stop there? Now overwhelmingly abortion is just another form of birth control. Kill that unborn child because he might in some way, she might in some way hinder my full actualization as a woman.

I'm gonna tell you that Satan is a liar, he's always been a liar. What did they say about homosexual marriage? All we're talking about, they said, is two people who love each other, they want to stay in a monogamous relationship for life just like heterosexual couples do. That's all we want. Just legalize marriage. And what's happened? LGBTQ+, we can't stop. Just more and more and more and more perversity. You open the door, you gotta let it all come in. Now they're at the church door. [knocking] "Hey, we want in there too. You've got to start changing how you define the roles of men and women. You've got to start changing how you view human sexuality. You've got to change in the church how you view the roles of women." And on and on we can go.

I wish I had a great, old, big, wooden door up here. Do you know what I'd do? I'd open it and I'd go, [shwoom] slam it shut. We're not following the world into hell. We're not following in the world into wickedness. Now you folks listen. I know you've got friends out there and they call themselves Christians and they call themselves good Baptists and they're already jumping on these horses. Look, this isn't my first rodeo. I've watched this stuff for four decades now, it never ends well. What's right and what's true stands in God's church and in God's kingdom for now and forever. We might get down to me and Pam and my children and eight more, I don't know, but we're not going with the world on these issues and we're not gonna start this clever intellectualized narrative how we can kind of be accommodating but yet still hold our position. That's where it starts and I'm

seeing that a lot right now in Baptist life, evangelical life. They're starting to open the door to accommodate and understand. All that is is just the next wave of pragmatism. Baptists are world record holders at being pragmatic and making the culture feel comfortable with our Gospel and they end up losing the Gospel.

Now look, there's 1,001 things we can just kind of be neutral on, 1,001 things we're not gonna beat people up over, but the things that are clear, systematically taught in the word of God, we're gonna stand on and one of those is that in God's church and in God's ordained marriages, headship belongs to men. And one of the reasons I hold to that not only because it honors the wisdom of my Creator but because ladies deserve to be respected and honored and upheld and loved and protected by the godly men in their lives, and I'm not gonna raise ladies up to a place where they lose that. Our daughters need that kind of protection and governance and guidance and oversight in their lives.

You know, did you ever see the survey that just came out? I'm, I'm getting off track in my notes a little bit, okay? I'm just kinda lost myself here for a moment. Did y'all see the survey that went out, they surveyed women about happiness? Did y'all see that? They surveyed all kinds of women about happiness. Do you know who far and away were the happiest women in America? Conservative Christian women. By far said they were happiest. You can't violate God's ordained structure and end up well. Can't do it.

He said, "I want godly men to lead the church." Paul says, "Timothy, make sure godly men are leading the church in this prayer effort." You see, if humble godly men lead, humble godly women will always follow. Shouldn't be any men leading with arrogant, brash, carnal force. There should be a humble yet clear leadership.

Lifting up holy hands, he said. Hands represent the activity of life. These men are to have no reproachable sin. They have sin but they're humble, they're repenters. They're not clutching to sins and holding sins active in their lives. They're men who have a good reputation without reproach. The word "holy" means unpolluted in this context.

Then he says, "I want men to lead this prayer effort without wrath and dissension." It's, it's just an easy simple thing. Now listen, if our lives and our hearts are holy and our spirits are humble, then there's not gonna be any wrath and dissension. I mean, when you're, when you're holy and humble, you lose your desire to be it. You lose your desire to say, "Well, I gotta have my way. I gotta have this platform in the church. I gotta have my voice here or there." You just, it just, that just kinda goes away if you're holy and humble and so wrath and dissension goes away. You've got to have fleshly people who care about power and control to have the kind of troubles we see in so many congregations. We've been there ourselves. It's been many many years now since we've had any of this, praise God for that, and I attribute that to one thing and one thing only, that a good percentage of you guys strive to walk in holiness and in humility.

So we're to pray. Men are, just don't lose the flow of the text. We're to pray for the salvation of souls. We're to pray for men to be saved. We're to pray for woman to be saved. We're to pray for governing authorities in this context. We're to pray that those

might be saved. Can I ask you something, men in the church, as you're to lead in your homes and you're to lead in the church in this carrying out the desire of God's heart that all men would come to the recognition of their sin and be saved, men, how can we receive the bounty of the Gospel then care little if others attain it? How can we drink of the waters of life and care little if others drink of it? How can we eat of the bread of heaven and care little if others eat? And Paul tells Timothy, "As you get the church in line, teach them to pray, even pray for those people they don't like and may not thought they ought to even pray for, even those governing authorities, but pray for all to come to the knowledge of the truth."

By the way, prayer is powerful. In John MacArthur's commentary, he points out the story of Stephen in the book of Acts. It's the story of when Stephen, a godly leader in the early church, would not recant of his commitment to Jesus Christ or the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and so they take him out to stone him, Acts 7:58-60, "When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses," notice this phrase, "laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul." That was his Hebrew name, his Greek name is Paul. "They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!' Having said this, he fell asleep." Stephen prayed for those who were stoning him that the Lord would not hold that sin against them. Saul of Tarsus was there that day. They laid their garments at Saul of Tarsus' feet. I do not know if he picked up a stone but I do know he was in full agreement with stoning Stephen because the next chapters of Acts show this Saul of Tarsus with authority from the governing authorities to be persecuting the church which he did with a fervent zeal. But as Stephen prayed that day, "God, don't hold this sin against them," Saul of Tarsus had to have heard that prayer but more importantly, God heard that prayer. You go to Acts 9, God apprehends Saul of Tarsus on his way to persecute the church. God converts this man. He's gloriously saved and instead of troubling the church, instead of worrying the church, instead of hindering the church, he becomes the great protector, defender, provider and builder of God's church and from that point on he increasingly began to be called by his Greek name, the Apostle Paul.

Prayer is powerful and that might be one of the best ways to live under the kind of governing authorities that will bless God's church is to get them saved. I believe that's why Paul writes this, he knows the power of prayer.

So can I just end with that exhortation I gave all of us earlier? In your small groups, let's bump it up a notch. Let's update those prospect lists and let's make time every week, and teachers, small group leaders, will you say, "Now men, ladies, let's remind ourselves to plead with God for these folks to be saved, and do what we can to get them under the Gospel or to share our testimony with them." It is God's great heart desire is that all men be saved and come to the recognition of the truth, even wicked governing authorities, even wicked ambassadors for wicked governments, Saul of Tarsus, who himself was saved and became a builder-up of the church, not a destroyer of the church.