

Subject: *Biblical Truth about Government – Part 4*

Scripture: *1 Timothy 2:1-6*

We have seen that government is authorized by God for our good. Government officials at all levels are God’s ministers. God has ordained government to promote the public good and punish those who break the law.

As citizens of this great nation we have certain rights, but as Christians we also have serious responsibilities. We have the right to protest and the right to free speech, but we have the obligation under God to pray.

Prayer makes a world of difference. Paul speaks to the issue of prayer in the church. He exhorts (strongly urges) us to pray “first of all” (first and foremost). Prayer is the most important thing in the church. We can do more than pray after we’ve prayed, but we can do nothing until we have first prayed. Jesus said in Matthew 21:13, “My house shall be called the house of prayer.” Prayer is not an option; it is an obligation. Prayer can do anything God can do, and God can do anything. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world. But prayer needs direction. Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Lk. 11:1).

In this message I want us to focus on praying for our government. Prayer doesn’t change God’s mind or force God’s hand, but prayer does honor God and please Him.

1. THE DESCRIPTION OF OUR PRAYERS (vs. 1)

How should we pray? Four words are used to describe prayer.

A. Supplications (urgent and intense desires)

Supplication comes from a Greek word that means “to lack, to be deprived, to be without something.” This word stresses the urgency and intense desire of the person who is praying. Warren Wiersbe said this is “intense prayer that comes from need that is felt.” God does business with people who mean business.

James 5:16 *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

B. Prayers (requests made to God)

The word supplication could be a request made to God or another person, but the word “prayers” is only used of a request made of God. This word implies the idea of reverence and the sacred nature of prayer.

C. Intercessions (drawing near to God)

We usually think of it as prayer offered on behalf of someone else, but that would be true of all these words. This word carries the special idea of drawing close to God and entering His presence with ease and freedom. It means to draw near for someone else’s benefit. A person once asked a friend, “When you have the ear of the King, please whisper my name.”

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

James 4:8 *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*

D. Giving of thanks (an attitude of contentment)

We give thanks for the privilege of prayer and for answers to prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 ¹⁷ *Pray without ceasing.* ¹⁸ *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

Philippians 4:6 *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

Praying people should be thankful people as we remember where our blessings come from.

2. THE FOCUS OF OUR PRAYERS (vs. 2a)

Who should we pray for? Two kinds of people are mentioned:

A. Pray for kings (supreme leaders)

B. Pray for all who are in authority (all branches and levels of government)

We need to pray for them instead of criticizing them. We should pray for kings whether they are good or bad and for all government officials, both good and bad. The government Paul refers to in the NT is the Roman Empire and the emperor at that time was Nero.

3. THE RESULT OF OUR PRAYERS (vs. 2b)

A. We can have a quiet and peaceable life

“Quiet” refers to lack of outside turmoil. “Peaceable” refers to lack of inner turmoil. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” One way to fulfill that is by praying for government.

B. We can live in all godliness and honesty

“Godliness” is the proper attitude and conduct before God. “Honesty” is moral dignity and excellence before man. Godliness refers to religious devotion and honesty refers to integrity.

Our founding fathers came to America to have religious freedom. The greatest freedom is the freedom to worship and serve God. We have seen a lot of our religious freedom taken away. Some have tried to define the separation of church and state to mean the separation of God and government. Some now want a completely secular state with no mention of God or the Bible at all. That’s not what our founding fathers had in mind.

The First Amendment to our Constitution says: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” In other words, the government is not to endorse a particular religion over another one, but at the same time the government should not prevent citizens from exercising their religion freely.

4. THE MOTIVE FOR OUR PRAYERS (vs. 3-6)

A. To please God

The purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth. This kind of prayer involves real faith in God.

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

B. To promote evangelism

“Will” refers to God's will of desire, not His will of decree. God has a desire for all people to be saved. In order for people to be saved they must know the truth. Lost sinners are not saved through ignorance. Salvation depends on knowing the truth. People need to know the one true God and the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Do you remember when Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8? Philip asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The Ethiopian replied, “How can I unless someone help me?” People need the truth and they need help if they are to understand it. We need to thank God for the freedom we have to share the Gospel and we need to use that freedom while we can.

When Paul wrote this to Timothy, he urged him to make prayer a priority in the church. Apparently the church was not praying for government as they should. What about our church? A praying church is made up of praying members. Every member of the church can pray.