

Peace in the Land

1 Timothy 2:1-4 New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995)

A Call to Prayer

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, 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.

Introduction

In today's passage, Paul is not giving political commentary—he is giving spiritual instruction. Before we go any further, let me say this plainly: **this message is not about endorsing a party or a platform; it is about obeying Scripture.** Our prayers must rise above political categories, because God calls us to pray for all people—especially those in authority—so that His saving purposes may advance.

To understand the weight of the biblical command, it helps to step back and look briefly at the systems of government that shape our world. Every nation—from America to North Korea, from China to Iran—operates under one form of human government or another. They may look different on the surface, but nearly all of them fall into one of two broad categories: **theo-cracy** (ruled by God, or ruled *in the name of* God) and **anthropo-cracy**—literally, 'rule by man'—ruled by humans.

A few nations today operate as theocracies, where religious authority governs the state. But most of the world functions under some form of human rule—democracy, autocracy, or one of the many varieties of oligarchy. Each system attempts, in its own way, to bring order and stability. And yet, no matter the structure, each system shares a common weakness: **humans run it.**

That's why even in a democracy (literally, 'rule by people')—which many believe is the best imperfect system we have—we still need God. Without the fear of God, leaders cannot lead with justice or fairness. Humans, left to themselves, drift toward corruption. Power invites pride. Leaders oppress. Only under God's rule is every person treated with equal dignity and worth.

As William Penn said, "Men must be governed by God, or they will be ruled by tyrants." In our own time, Charles Colson warned that when the Church gives up its rightful

place as the (divine) conscience of the culture, 'the consequences for society can be horrific.' These warnings confirm our text: we must pray for our leaders to be guided by God's truth, or the stability we desire will crumble.

Content

Now, I am taking you to the Bible where we can see examples of theocracy and how it evolved into anthropocracy in the history of God's people. When the Israelites came out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, it was theocracy. God spoke, Moses conveyed God's message, and people followed. They entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. This pattern of theocracy continued for the next hundreds of years. Israel followed the leaders a.k.a. "judges" (from which the title of Bible book came: Judges) whom God raised, appointed, and worked with for Israel.

After practicing theocracy for so many years, the Israelites realized that all the surrounding kingdoms had different system. Kingdoms. Anthropocracy: kings, human leaders. They started envying the kingdom system and asked God to give them a human king as well.

At first, God was displeased with their request for the following two reasons. First, their request for a king was a **rejection of God's leadership** over them (The LORD said, "*they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them*"---1 Samuel 8:7).

Another reason was that the Israelites wanted to **be like 'all the other nations**. "*God had created Israel as a unique people. He was their leader. When the Israelites wanted a king like other nations had, they were rejecting their unique, set-apart position as God's people. The nation whose God was to be the Lord alone was **envious of the nations who followed false gods***" (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Israelites-ask-king.html>).

Before He allowed a human king over them, the Lord gave them a solemn warning about the problems of having human kings: "*the potential tyranny and exploitation that a king would bring. He warns that a king will take their sons and daughters for his service, seize the best of their fields and vineyards, and impose heavy taxes (1 Samuel 8:11-18). The warning concludes with a sobering prediction: "When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you on that day" (1 Samuel 8:18)*" (https://biblehub.com/topical/t/the_danger_of_human_kingship.htm).

Despite the warnings, the Israelites still preferred a human king over the divine King. Since then, they never reverted to theocracy. In the end, the LORD reluctantly allowed them to have their wish: a human king. So, the kingdom of Israel was born with their first king Saul, followed by King David, King Solomon and so forth for the next 400 + years.

Yet, God wasn't totally out from the lives of His people: He still removes kings and raises up kings (Daniel 2:21). Behind the rise and fall of every leader on earth, the Sovereign God is there. In the world of politics, we see the hands of God among leaders and people.

Now, I am going to tell you the stories of three kings in the Bible: David, Solomon, and the King of Nineveh. In David → we will learn that leader's integrity matters. In Solomon → we will see that faithfulness to God matters. In the King of Nineveh → we will see that king's repentance and humility saves the land.

Let's check them out one by one.

King David. King David's personal sins (adultery, murder, and cover up) negatively affected his people. The king's personal sins caused the entire nation to suffer later. The LORD told him, saying "*You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.*"¹⁰ Now therefore, the **sword** shall never depart from your house" (2 Samule 2:10). Later, his own son revolted against David and consequently many perished.

The lesson? Each political **leader's integrity matters** in the lives of people and affects them either positively or negatively. E.g., about 15 years ago, a survey was conducted on the political leaders in France. Question was: *Which behavior would be the absolute "NO" in the president?* Cheating, bribery, and other faults were listed in the survey. However, there was one thing the majority believe the leader should never do: **lie to the public**. How true! People want their leaders to be upright. The survey result clearly shows that personal integrity still matters in politics.

Going back to David's story, confronted by the prophet Nathan about his crimes, King David repented of his sin and mended his wrongs with God and with his people. We need a leader like him. Every leader makes mistakes. However, only the one who is convicted by God of his or her sins can repent. We need a leader who fears God in humility. Remember David in your next vote.

Second example is **King Solomon**. As you know, he was the son of David. He became king rather in his early years. Perhaps, in his early twenties. When he became king, God appeared in his dream and asked him to request anything he wanted (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon asked for only one thing: wisdom to govern God's people: not long life, not riches, nor the life of his enemies, but the wisdom to govern people. Because of that, God granted them all: wisdom to govern, wealth, and longevity. He ruled for 40 years.

God's Word, however, points out to Solomon's apostasy in the end. He started his kingship with the right foot yet ended with the wrong foot. He went astray from his first love and devotion to the Lord and ended up worshiping many other gods. Unlike his father David, Solomon never repented of his sin before God. And, during his son's reign (King Rehoboam), the kingdom was divided into two: 10 tribes out of the 12 formed the Northern Kingdom (Kingdom of Israel) and practiced persistent idol worship for the next 300 years until they were utterly destroyed by the Assyrians.

The lesson? **The leader's faith matters.** When the leader follows other gods than the LORD, the public may not see the outcome right away, but it will have dire consequences in the lives of people later.

The third example is **the King of Nineveh**. You know the story of Jonah and the big fish. Nineveh was the enemy of Israel. God sent Jonah the prophet to the kingdom of Nineveh with His message of doom. God would destroy Nineveh in the next forty days. Jonah at first ran away from God but eventually went there and proclaimed the message to the kingdom. When the king of Nineveh heard the message of doom and destruction, he ordered every person in his kingdom, male and female, and even animals to fast, that is, not to eat or drink, and humble themselves before God.

When all the people and animals in Nineveh did that, God changed His mind. He spared them from the destruction. Jonah was really upset with the change of the plan, but God was pleased to see the king's repentance along with his people.

The lesson? Leaders should **take God's message** seriously. Furthermore, one leader's decision to humble himself before the Lord and invite the rest of nations to repent made the difference in the destiny of a nation. The leader's repentance spares a nation from God's wrath.

Now, a quick review on today's verse. It is God's will for us the believers to remember all people, especially those in authority, in our prayers. Most of us would say, "I want to **do something, not just pray**, for our country." God still would say to us, "**Pray first** before you do anything else. Pray for all people in your land with petitions and thanksgiving. Do so, especially on behalf of your leaders."

Remember: it is our Christian duty to pray for our leaders. If you don't pray for our leaders, you are neglecting your duty before God. Are you Christ's follower? Then, pray for your leaders. It doesn't matter which political affiliation you have. Whether you agree or disagree with those in office, you still pray. **For them, not against them.**

Paul wrote today's text while Nero was ruling—a tyrannical, cruel emperor who persecuted Christians. It is often hardest to pray for the leaders we find most offensive. But that is precisely when our prayers become a true act of **obedience** and **faith**, trusting God to work even through imperfect vessels. The duty of prayer comes before your vote. Pray for the leaders. Do not curse them. Don't forget: your prayers matter to God, because they are good and acceptable (v. 3). E.g., Abraham's prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah. There are more cases of prayers that saved nations and races from their troubles: Esther. Moses.

Let me remind you why God commands us to pray for our leaders. Peace in the land depends on them, and God makes godly leaders through our prayers! Do you want peace and tranquility in the land, then pray for the leaders. Remember King David, Solomon, and even the king of Nineveh. Hearing our prayers, God shapes and transforms our leaders; then, our leaders' behavior and actions directly affect our tranquility and peace. When we pray, the Lord guides our leaders into the light and truth. When they are saved and walk in truth, they will lead us with true freedom and justice, bringing peace to the land. When we don't pray for them, our leaders may go astray, stay in darkness, and consequently, chaos and trouble will fill our land.

You may ask: what do I pray for the leaders? Here are the things you can pray for them: Pray that God would grant them **wisdom** to govern God's people. Pray for the **sensitivity** to discern God's will and directions. Pray for the **humility and courage** to repent. Remember David: pray for integrity. Remember Solomon: pray for spiritual faithfulness. Remember the King of Nineveh: pray for repentance and humility.

One last point: In verse 4, it says, God wants **all men** (v. 4) to be saved and come to know the truth. "All men" includes you and me. Do you want to live in the land where truth prevails? Then, know Jesus who is the truth that sets people free. Do you want freedom in our land? Then, take Jesus and His teaching seriously. Put His teaching into action. Then, we will have peace in our land. When leaders and citizens walk in God's truth, it naturally fosters the freedom, dignity, and peace that God intends for the land.

Conclusion

I invite you to say the following prayer with me: Lord, grant our leaders **integrity** (like David), **spiritual faithfulness** and **wisdom** (like Solomon), and the **humility to repent** when wrong (like the King of Nineveh). Do this so that we may live a tranquil life and your gospel may advance. Amen.