

Praying for Our Government



Ruling by Prayer (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to share together on the limitless possibilities of prayer. In my talk yesterday I laid a foundation of three important and related truths. First, God has made us a kingdom of priests. It is our responsibility to rule the world for God by our prayers. Second, to be effective, our prayers must be both directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Third, the Spirit and the word of God always work together. The power of the Holy Spirit only works through our prayers insofar as they are in line with the word of God.

I gave two examples from the Bible. In the Old Testament, Elijah, by his prayers controlled the fall of rain in Israel for three and a half years. In the New Testament the corporate prayers of the church first released Peter from a maximum security jail and then put a swift and frightening end to the career of a corrupt ruler, Herod. In each case, these prayers provoked direct angelic intervention on behalf of those for whom prayer was given.

Now today I'm going to develop this theme of "Ruling by Prayer" in a very practical way. I'm going to speak about our obligation to pray for our government. It's an unfortunate fact that multitudes of Christians are not aware of this obligation that is directly placed upon us by the New Testament. The passage I'm going to look at first is in 1 Timothy 2:1-4. This is what Paul says:

> "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (NAS)

This is one of the most logical passages that I know of in the Bible. It unfolds a series of thoughts and obligations upon us and it gives us the most sound and logical reasons for what it is saying. Let me explain it to you in the following steps. First of all, the first public ministry of the church coming together

in assembly is prayer. Paul says, "First of all, I urge that entreaties, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men." If we sum up those four words in one, the one word would be prayer. So the first public ministry of the church coming together in assembly is prayer.

This agrees with Isaiah 56:7 where God says, "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all people." The first particular thing that we are required to pray for is all men. In other words, our prayers are to be as wide in their outreach as the love and the mercy of God and the offer of the gospel to all men.

I pointed out yesterday that so many Christians are so very self-centered in their praying. I gave you the old example of the church member's prayer: "God bless me and my wife, my son John, and his wife; us four, no more! Amen." Obviously that is not at all in line with what Paul says that we're to pray for all men.

The first particular category of men that we are to pray for, according to Paul's word, is "kings and all who are in authority." Of course, in this western side of the Atlantic there are not many kings. So let's just leave out that and just say all who are in authority: rulers, the government. Do you realize that the first particular topic that we are to pray for when we come together as Christians in church is our government, those in authority over us?

My observation is that in multitudes of churches they never think about that, even once a month. And yet Paul puts it first. What are we to ask God to do for and through the government? Paul says, "That we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and dignity." Let's ask ourselves this simple question. Does the government we live under affect the life we lead? Obviously it affects it in many ways continually. So if we want to lead a good life, logic and self-interest alone would indicate that we should pray for our government.

What are we to ask that the government will achieve? It will achieve a situation in which we who are under the government may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. I believe that's the primary function of government clearly described. In other words, what we are really to pray for is that the government will do its job properly. Or more simply still, we're to pray for good government.

Now in the next verse, Paul goes on to say, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." What's the "this" refer to? The thing in the previous verse that we have just analyzed which is good government. So Paul is saying, and this is tremendously important, good government is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

I wonder how many Christians realize that God approves of good government. Good government is the will of God. Now, the next verse tells us one great basic reason why God approves of good government, why it's His will. It says, "God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." I pointed out already that God's mercy and love are outstretched to the whole human race. God wants all men to be saved, but they cannot be saved without coming to the knowledge of the truth. And they cannot come to the knowledge of the truth unless the truth of the gospel is presented to them; is preached to them.

So for that very simple and logical reason, God wants the truth of the gospel proclaimed to all men everywhere. All we have to do then is ask ourselves one more question. Which makes it easier to proclaim the gospel; good government or bad government? I think the answer is too obvious to need a lot of explanation. Bad government hinders the preaching of the gospel. Good government, in many different ways, facilitates the preaching of the gospel. So good government is the revealed will of God.

To sum up what I have just been saying, I'm going to read to you now a brief passage from my book, Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting. At the end of this talk you will hear how you may obtain a copy of this book. This is what I say on page 42 of the book:

We are now in a position to present the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:1-4 in a series of simple logical steps:

> "The first ministry and outreach of believers meeting together in a regular fellowship is prayer. The first specific topic for prayer is the government. We are to pray for good government. God desires all men to have the truth of the gospel preached to them. Good government facilitates the preaching of the gospel, while bad government hinders it. Therefore good government is the will of God."

Let me read that conclusion once more, it's one of the most important conclusions in the whole of the Scriptures. It affects our whole lives. "Good government is the will of God."

Now let me relate to that a passage in 1 John 5:14-15 where John tells us a simple basic requirement for receiving the answer to our prayers. This is what he says:

> "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, [that is before God] that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." (NAS)

Let me read that latter part again. "If we ask anything according to God's will we know He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request which we have asked from Him." You see the basis of successful praying is knowing that you're praying according to the will of God. And the will of God is revealed primarily in the Bible.

Let's apply this principle of praying according to the will of God and knowing that God hears us and knowing that we have what we've prayed for to the particular theme we're dealing with, that is praying for our government. I'll sum it up this way: If we pray according to God's will He hears us. If we know that He hears us, we know that we have what we asked for. We know that good government is according to God's will. Therefore, if we pray for good government, we know that God hears us. And if we know that God hears us, we know that we have what we asked for. What are we talking about? We're talking about good government.

So, let's give it a very practical application that applies to the situation in the United States today. If we do not have good government, and I am only saying an "if", each one of us has to decide how far we consider our government good or ineffective or inefficient or whatever estimate we make of the government, but if we do not have good government, what is the reason? There are only two possible reasons if we believe what the Bible teaches. The first reason is we have not prayed as we ought to. And I suppose that applies to well over half the professing Christians in the United States. They never really pray intelligently and with real concern for the government. They shrug their shoulders and criticize the government but they do not pray for it.

Let me point out to you that there's no authority in Scripture to criticize the government but there is an obligation to pray for it. And if you're one of those who criticize let me suggest that if you spent less time criticizing and more time praying, you might have less to criticize.

The first possible reason, which is the commonest, is that we have not prayed. But there's another possible reason which is that we have prayed, but without knowing that good government is the will of God. Because it's only if we pray, knowing what is God's will, that we can say we have what we've prayed for; that is, good government.

Now why do we Christians find it so hard to believe that so much depends on our praying? We take the attitude the government's outside our control, there's nothing we can do about it. We shrug our shoulders and we criticize, we complain, but we don't pray. I believe the real reason why we don't pray is because we have not understood the limitless possibilities of praying according to God's word.

All right, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking to you directly out of my own personal experience. I'll be giving you examples of how I myself have seen history shaped by prayer.

Radio Program

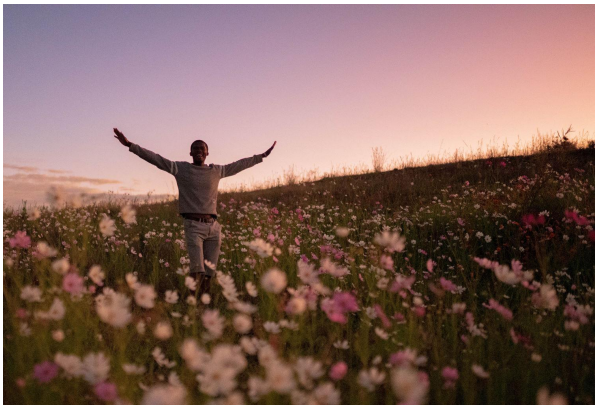
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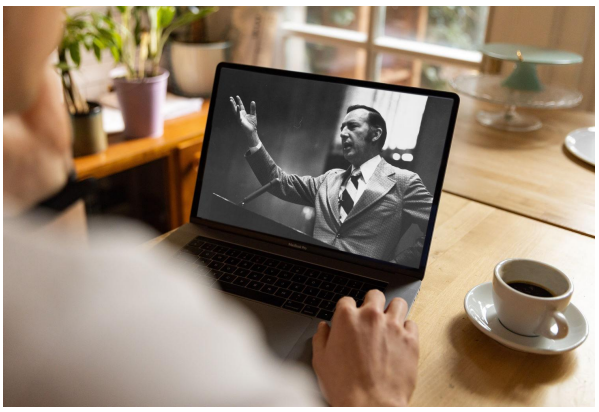
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