

How to Pray for President Barack Obama
1 Timothy 2:1-7

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Text: ¹ Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. ³ For 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 between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, ⁷ for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ *and* not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

No doubt you are aware that on this coming Tuesday, we will place into office a new President, President Barack Obama. You are probably also aware that there has been a continuing movement among some in our nation to remove from the inauguration ceremonies any mention of God. In fact a lawsuit has been filed in Federal Court to remove from the oath of office the phrase, "So help me God." The lawsuit also wants to prevent inaugural prayers from being delivered at the event. "We're hoping to stop prayer and religious rituals at governmental functions, especially at the inauguration," Dan Barker, co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, told Fox News Radio.

Barker further said, "The inauguration is not a religious event. It is a secular event of a secular country that includes all Americans, including those of us who are not Christians, including those of us who are not believers."

In addition to this sentiment from an Atheist, I have heard and read in more than one instance an aversion among Christians to pray for our President-Elect. The rationale, I suppose, goes something like this: "I did not vote for him; I will not pray for him." I expect the Atheist to be opposed to praying. For the believer to be opposed to praying for President Obama is unthinkable, unbiblical, and un-Christ-like.

The text before us this morning gives us all the case we need to pray for the President among all our leaders in authority. I want to provide an outline for this text this morning as a Biblical foundation and then I want to provide a practical outline to guide us in our praying in these coming years.

A Biblical Introduction:

The Command to Pray

The command to pray is easy enough to spot in this text. The question whether to pray for our President is over. We have started this year out by thinking about wisdom. I suppose you could say this morning, "It is wise to pray for our President."

Some object, as I said earlier, with thoughts like, "I don't feel this particular President has the blessing of God. I did not vote for him." Perhaps, but isn't that all the more reason to pray for him? Jesus said, as we will come to in a few weeks as we continue our study on the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and *pray* for those who

spitefully use you and persecute you.” (Matthew 6:44) As a follower of Jesus Christ, we have no option, but to sincerely pray for the President.

The Context of the Prayer

The next thing I want us to notice in this prayer is the context of the command. There are several aspects of the context that are important to notice. First, we begin verse 1 with this always important word, “Therefore.” The word causes us to mark context. The word causes us to look back and see the argument. First Timothy is a primer from Paul to Timothy on being a pastor—leading the church. Chapter one indicates the need for true doctrine to be preached. In addition, chapter one contains Paul’s testimony with the implication now that Paul and Timothy must take this message of Christ to the unbelievers. So, the book outlines establishing the environment for this kind of preaching and teaching to take place. So, first the context is one of establishing the right environment to spread the Gospel.

Now, add to this, the phrase, “first of all.” Here is a phrase that marks a chronological list that is to come. However, might also this phrase imply order of importance? Interesting, isn’t it, that of greatest importance in establishing an environment for which the Gospel can spread is prayer—especially included in that prayer—a prayer for the civil leaders of the world.

The last contextual item to take note over is to reminisce a moment about the kind of civil authority that would have existed in Paul’s day. The Roman Empire was firmly in control when Paul would have written to Timothy. The Roman leaders from the Emperor to the Provincial Governors would not have been friends of Christianity.

The context of this call to prayer is not a call to pray for those leaders with whom we find agreement, but as the text suggests, “for *all* who are in authority.”

The Content of the Prayer

I want us to notice the content of the prayer. Four words are used in this text—supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks. The first three words are non-distinguishable in difference. The repetition is probably used to show us the seriousness of the prayer rather than a difference in kinds of praying. The fourth word stands alone, helping us to see that two things are included in the content of the prayer.

Thanksgiving—Now, don’t let me lose some of you. A leader that we neither voted for nor particularly care for is better than anarchy.

Intercession—We are to thank God for him as well as pray for him. We’ll talk very specifically about how to pray for him in just one moment.

The Consequences of the Prayer

Next, notice the consequences of such praying. Here is the purpose of the praying more so than the content of the praying. In so praying for our leaders, our purpose is “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” Here again is the environment to continue to preach the Gospel and live in a nation with Godly principles.

The Conclusion of the Prayer

Verse 7 gives us the conclusion of our prayer effort for those in authority. Here is the reminder that we have a job as well. Here's a message for us: God has not called us to be President. He has called us to be a herald, a preacher, and a teacher of truth. I have not been called to be a politician. I have been called to be a preacher. That means, that I speak out when necessary, but my primary job is to preach and teach. The best way for me to impact my nation is to continue to preach and teach the Word of God.

A Practical Intercession

I think it best to put this Biblical model in a real practical focus. So, let me give you a guide to praying for the President.

In regards to his personal life, we ought to pray for safety.

We need to pray for the safety of his family. We ought to want to pray for the protection of his relationship with his wife and with his little girls. It is hard enough to find adequate time to spend with our families with our jobs and pace of life. Can you imagine family life as President of the United States? Join me in praying for his safety.

In regards to his spiritual life, we ought to pray for the ...

Authenticity of his salvation. Let me be clear about this—I have no idea whether Barack Obama is a born again believer. He says he believes in Jesus. He came to this salvation experience some 20 years ago by his own testimony. So, I have no idea of his heart. I will just say this. As for me, I will continue to pray for anybody's salvation so long as I hear that person say that there are many ways to God. Until a person is ready to say that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation, according to the Bible, that person has not fully understood what it means to believe in Jesus for salvation. (That even appears in this text in verses 5-6). I don't care your political persuasion or denominational affiliation, until you arrive at a place where you are able to say "In Christ alone" is my trust, you have not believed in Him for salvation and eternal life.

Ability to hear from the Holy Spirit. In addition, we need to pray for President Obama to hear from the Holy Spirit. The decisions before him are enormous. The problems before him are enormous. These kinds of decisions and problems are not for man alone; this kind of pressure needs the wisdom of God.

We need to be praying that God change President Obama's mind on a number of issues. For one, we need to be praying that the Holy Spirit changes his mind in regards to the laws in our land regarding abortion. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people. Really, we cannot fully receive the blessing of God with this kind of sin in our midst. The good news is that God can change his mind. I can point to a Scripture in Proverbs 21. Verse one reads, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

In regards to his Presidential life, we ought to pray for his success.

Finally, we ought to pray for his success. As President Obama has success in helping our nation, we will have success. I cannot imagine not wanting him to be successful in leading our country internationally and domestically. To me, that would be like sitting on the bench for your ball team, but because you are sitting on the bench, you hope your team loses.

Conclusion: When all is said and done about this President, the final word is the word of the Psalmist in Psalm 20:7, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember (trust) in the name of the LORD our God." Our trust and/or our future is not in Washington or Wall Street, it is in Heaven. Blessed be the name of the LORD, our God!