

One of the down-sides of being a pastor in a very small church, is I don't get away much (especially on Sundays), which means I don't get to visit other churches and to fellowship with them, very often.

But on the odd occasion that I **do** get to visit another church, observing a church in prayer, tells me a lot about who they are, and where they're at with God. I've been to some churches, and

- nothing flash;
- nothing showy;
- a basic, faithful biblical message;
- nothing particularly polished about the music group.....

but when they prayed, it became obvious that they were a praying church.

We're studying 1 Timothy. It's a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to a young pastor, by the name of Timothy. And today, we've moving into what is really the key section of the letter, which is to do with having Good Order in the church. In this section, Paul is going to give instructions on:

- offices in the church, and the different roles that are fulfilled:
 - Elders and Deacons;
 - Bishops and
- sound teaching;
- how to keep a church on track;
- widows;
- remarriage;
- how we care for those who are in need;
- how we provide for those who preach the Gospel.

- controversial topics of how men and women have different rolls in the church

He's going to cover all of that and more, in this section about having "good order" in the church. But for Paul, when it comes to the order of the church, it is of first importance that we are a praying church. And the **subject** of our prayers, is of first importance.

Something that I've noticed, is that as churches have become more "professional" in their presentation, often something that loses out, is prayer. The music and the singing becomes the centre-piece, and prayer becomes little snippets of praise, used as 'filler' between songs.

It was a young man brought this to my attention (Hello Thomas if you're listening). He said to me, "Prayer has become a means of transitioning between songs"... And I'd never thought about that, but he was exactly right.

And those prayers are usually "touch me" prayers, or "fill me prayers", "praise You" or "bless us" prayers, or "send your word out" prayers...

But in the Christian church, of first importance, is praying for others. Why would that be of first importance? Because that's where God's **heart** is. God **loves** 'the others'. God **loves** the unsaved. And so, praying for others – it isn't simply a church tradition – it's expressing the heart of God, within the church.

Today's the 2nd week we're spending on this passage. On Good Friday, I sorta "gutted" it – I stole the highlight out of it V3-6.

And being Good Friday, we focused on how Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all. Why? Because it is God's desire for all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth...

And if **God** loves all people, and if Christ Jesus gave Himself as a **ransom** for all people, **we** should love all people. And how should we demonstrate our love for all people? In prayer. **2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people**

Alright, when we pray (in the church), we don't just pray for ourselves, or for our church – we pray for all people.

- Supplications – making requests for specific needs;
- prayers – Bringing these people in view before God;
- intercessions – appealing boldly on their behalf;
- thanksgivings – that's thankfulness to God. And not just thankfulness for what God has done, but thankfulness for those for whom we pray.

And then, it gets even more specific. We are to pray ² **for kings and all who are in high positions**

To pray for:

- the Prime Minister;
- His ministers of cabinet;
- our Members of Parliament;

- The Queen;
- Governor General; and
- Senate;

- Premier;
- Her ministers:
- our members of Parliament;

- Mayor;
- Councillors;
- Councillor Scriven (Scott)...

We pray for **all** of our leaders – for **all** who are in high positions.

Now, this a timely reminder for us. We're coming up to a Federal Election at the moment, and if you're like me, you're probably sick of our politicians and how they carry on: *"I'm better than he is. Look how terrible he is"* *"And look, they've ruined this, and we would've been so much better."*...

Alright, we get 'fed-up' with our leaders, but we're being told here, to pray for **all who are in high position**. We intercede for them. That means we appeal boldly to God on their behalf..

And most of us would probably be happy to do that, because we can see that they need our prayers. – we would pray, “Fix ‘em Lord – they’ve got things so wrong...” But not only are we to pray for them – we are to give God “**thanksgiving**” for them...

When’s the last time we did that??? Afterall, isn’t “running our politicians down”, a favourite Australian pastime??? Giving thanks for them – that goes a bit against the grain, doesn’t it.

So, let’s be clear: The Apostle Paul is telling us here, to give thanksgiving to God for all people, and especially for our leaders... And some of you might jump up and down at this point, and say, “Now hang on a minute Michael, we can only give thanks to God for **good** leaders...” And as we don’t have any, that’s why we don’t give thanks for them.....

Or maybe if the person I voted for gets elected, I might give thanks to God, but then after a month or 2, they’ve disappointed me, and the thanksgiving stops.

But there is no proviso here. We are to pray for all people and give thanks for them (even the leaders, or especially the leaders.) And there’s no proviso as to whether they are good/bad.

You see, whether our leaders are good or bad, they are leaders of a God-ordained National system of Governance that provides public services, and law and order for the society in which we live. If we think that things are bad with the leaders

we have, how much worse would it be, if our society crumbled, and there were no police; no law courts; prisons; no sanitation; no medical services; no regulation at all... things would run amuck.

You see, in praying for our leaders, we have an ulterior motive – we benefit from this:

that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

“Civil peace”, (no matter who the leader is), provides the conditions under which Godly living may flourish.

Do you want to digest that for a moment?

“Civil peace”, (no matter who the leader is), provides the conditions under which Godly living may flourish.

When the people of Israel had been deported to Babylon, (and let's be clear here, Babylon was a godless nation), and Babylon had invaded Israel, conquered Israel, and taken a large portion of the population away from Israel, into Babylon. And God's instruction to these exiles (living in Babylon), was “don't fight against it”. “Don't fight against your captors (even though they're ungodly), but make the best of it:

Jeremiah 29:5-7 (ESV)

⁵ Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶ Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷ But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

This is an appropriate message for us to hear. As God's people, we live in a foreign culture – a Godless culture. Our calling, isn't to tear it down. We are to pray for them. Seek the welfare of the land where God has sent us, because in its welfare, we find our welfare.

What is the aim of this?

Godly living, and dignified living... How do disciples of Jesus honour God, in a land who do not know God? ... Godly living; and dignified living.

And if we live in a land that experiences “civil peace”, this is something to give thanks to God for.

And one of the most evangelical things that we can do, is pray.... Even for unbelievers....

We all have friends who are unbelievers,,, Next time one of them tells you their troubles, say “I'd like to pray for you”, and most people will respond with “sure”, thinking you're

going to do that after they're gone. But then in boldness, launch straight in and pray for them, and 95/100 they will be so thankful you did that... It's amazing how powerful prayer is, in sharing the love of Jesus with another person.

When they know that you love them, and you care for them enough, that you would pray for them & intercede/give God thanks for them,, That's when they might discover that God loves them too. And of course He does. He loves them so much, that Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all.

There is **one** God. There is **one** mediator. If you missed the Good Friday message, you'll have to catch up with that and download the message on the internet.

And so Paul says in V8

⁸ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling

Prayer in the church & praying for others (in the church), is essential.

But Prayer isn't something we only do on a Sunday when we get together. Pray in every place.

lifting holy hands : that's not about showiness... What that means, is "Our hands have to be holy". – "We have to get ourselves right with God, before we pray for someone else."...

There's no place for anger or quarrelling in the church. This is about:

- quiet living;
- peaceful living;
- holiness;
- dignified living;
- Godliness...

And from this position, we pray for all, - especially our leaders.

And shortly, we're going to do that.

But for now, I have a very short prayer,

Lord,
teach us how to pray.
Help us to love others,
Help us to love them as You love them,
And show us how to pray for those You love.

By Your Holy Spirit,
help us to lead a peaceful and quiet life,
godly and dignified in every way.
knowing ³ This is good, and it is pleasing
in the sight of You,
our God our Saviour

Sentence: If God loves all, we pray for all, and give thanks for all.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

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Bush Disciples

Amen.