

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“Our Conduct in the World”

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Today we will be in 1 Timothy chapter 2 doing the first part of that chapter. If you will turn there, we will be looking at some of Paul’s instructions about prayer and governing authorities.

In November, you are probably aware, since it is kind of hard to miss even seven months ahead of time, that we have an election coming up. Unlike Pat Robertson, God has not told me who is going to win; but I can make one prediction.

I have a great suspicion that on the Sunday before election day, we will be visited- as we are every Sunday before election day- by some people or person that decides they would like to pass out some analysis of who we should vote for. This has been going on for many years and it’s kind of a humorous undertaking because at different times, different people have gone out and said could you please not go out and put things on everyone’s windshields.

Sometimes, they are very cooperative, but other times they don’t understand what the point is and they have to get me and I’ll say I’m one of the pastors here and we prefer you not do this. I’ve heard things like, well, I’ve been told by so and so that I should come and do this; and I would say, well, I don’t really care who so and so is; I’d rather you not do this.

One person basically was going to do it anyway and so he proceeded to put them on the windshield and we proceeded to take them off the windshield and he soon found out that it was a rather useless undertaking. I don’t know if I have been able or if anybody has been able to convince these people why we rather they not do this; or, even maybe convince you, why we rather people not do this.

This passage today might help us out and bring us to a clear understanding about what God would really want us to do in light of governing authorities. So lets turn to 1 Timothy chapter 2 and see one of the most important things that we should be doing and why. It’s not only important to know what the scripture says, but also, why it says what it does.

1 Timothy 2:1-7, "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. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time. And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

This is what we are called to do. We are called to pray for our earthly authorities. "I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority." This is said first of all. This first thing is not in sequence, or in a string of things, but being the first in importance. The most important thing we can do, for all men and for governing authorities, is to pray.

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On the Sunday before Election Day, the most important thing we can do for our governing authorities is to pray, as well as after Election Day and anytime in between. This is true of all men. This is how important prayer is. What we are to pray for is entreaties, prayers, petitions and even thanksgiving.

Looking at the people who Paul was speaking about, the kings and the governing authorities of his day, you might be a little hard pressed to find things to be thankful for, wouldn't you, compared to our nation today. In spite of this, we should be thankful for our governing authorities even when they are not doing the things that we would like to see them do, or when we would like to see them changed and some other governing authorities take over. We should even pray with thanksgiving.

The word 'entreaties' is in here, which is kind of interesting; it's a play on words. This is a word that was regularly used for having an audience before a king. If you were going to make an audience before a king, to petition for a need, this was the word that was used. The picture here is that we are coming before the King of Kings making an entreaty on behalf of the king, the earthly king.

God is supreme over all kings and when we entreat before Him, He is able to change things. Like Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes." He is truly able to sovereignly control what happens with the governing authorities, even ruthless, evil ones as in Paul's day.

Who are we to pray for? We are to pray for all men, no one is excluded. It may be hard to pray for 6 billion people, but the concept here is that you should not exclude anyone from your prayer, no matter how vile you may think they are.

Who are the kings of today? Well, we have presidents, right? So you should pray for our president, and pray regularly as of first importance. Who are other kings? It's quiz time. Who's this? It's Chirac of France.

Sometimes we think of only our circumstances and who is over us; but this is for kings, plural. It's people that are actually over other people as well. Sharon of Israel, pray for him. Kharzai of Afghanistan, pray for him.

As you watch the news, take these great opportunities to be reminded of whom to pray for. Kim of North Korea, pray for him. You have a twenty-five percent chance of naming the person who is Korean saying Kim!

All who are in authority is everybody who is in authority, governmental authority. Not only on a national level but even on a local or a state level. Here's a group of people you should pray for. This is the council that is seeking to govern Iraq at this point in time, a collection of people, good people to pray for. They need a lot of prayer right about now.

How about him? Even Arnold Schwarzenegger, the governor of California should be prayed for. I bet you never thought you would be praying for Arnold Schwarzenegger, but you are commanded to pray for kings and all who are in authority, even Arnold Schwarzenegger. Pray for all men.

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As we consider the priority of first importance, Paul tells us why we should do this. Don't miss this, "in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." This tells us why we should be motivated to pray. It's not so that people will start conducting themselves properly, or will change the way they are treating us, or something like that. It's so we can live a quiet, tranquil life. Let's look at why.

A tranquil and quiet life has these meanings. Tranquil refers to the removal of external difficulties that come to us from others. We can live in tranquility when external difficulties that come from others are removed. Quiet refers to the lack of internal strife in our own lives. There is a correlation between the two. The more internal strife we have in our own lives the more likely we are to have strife around us. We can even be creating strife. Even if we are able to be at peace with our own lives and peace with God, and not creating strife, we should pray for our governing authorities that we could have a tranquil life around us. There is a purpose for this tranquil life, to live in all godliness and dignity.

When I spoke about people passing out flyers and that sort of thing, there's a reason behind why we would rather that not happen. Our mission as a church is to function as the scriptures would have us to in relation to the governing authorities. There are really two statements and only two statements in the new testament that direct our attention to governing authorities. One is this *to pray for governing authorities* and the other is *to obey the governing authorities* except in very narrow restrictive cases where they are commanding us to do what God would have us not to do or forbid something that God commands us to do.

If they say don't preach the gospel, as they did two thousand years ago, we should respond as Peter did and say we should obey God rather than men. That's a narrow case. They can restrict it with out forbidding it. They can say don't preach the gospel in a park. We can still preach the gospel quite well if we don't do it in a certain place. When they completely forbid something that God commands we cannot work around that. So those are the two commands.

That doesn't mean that we are not able to do something else. If God doesn't say don't do something it's not proper for us to say that's wrong to do. So, there is nothing fundamentally wrong with passing out flyers, telling people whom to vote for, nothing fundamentally wrong about that at all. There's no scripture that teaches about that, but there is a perspective of what's important that the scripture brings to us. You can say, well back in Paul's day they didn't really have the opportunity to change governing authorities, but we do. This becomes more of an opportunity, so we should do that.

Regardless of which government has been in place, there have always been, through out time, people that have wanted to change that governing authority. Even in Paul's day, there were people who wanted to change the governing authority. They were known as the zealots. You may remember Simon the zealot, one of Jesus' disciples. Jesus didn't say, Simon, you have a great cause; I think I'll join you. No, He called Simon the zealot out from the movement to change the governing authorities to follow Him for His kingdom that was not of this world.

There were people who were seeking to change the governing authorities in those days as well as today, but that isn't the emphasis at all that the scripture gives us.

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The emphasis is to live a peaceful and quiet life in the midst of even ruthless governing authorities for a purpose which we get to look at some more here. In the order of magnitude, the goal of our lives is to live a peaceful and tranquil and quiet life in the midst of whatever governing authority exists.

This movement to bring change to the government in our day and age is not new among some Christians. There was actually an organization established in 1874, The Women's Christian Temperance Union. The Women's Christian Temperance Union was sort of the great grandmother of Christian organizations that were seeking political influence. They had one agenda; to eradicate alcohol from the nation. They saw alcohol as a great evil. Frankly, I could be somewhat sympathetic with them. I'm not a big fan of alcohol myself. I would say, personally, if no one drank alcohol we would be better off. I think they held the same conviction. Their attempt ended up, many years later in 1920, with the 18th amendment to the constitution. Prohibition, which was to forbid, make illegal, the sale of alcohol and the making of it in the United States.

There was such enthusiasm for this amendment and such hope that this would eradicate social evils that there were even places that liquidated some of the jail facilities believing that crime was going to be diminished. Quite the opposite happened. Year in and year out crime grew dramatically from 1920 to 1933, and in those years the murder rate grew by 50% and by some accounts crime quadrupled. It didn't eliminate crime; it fueled it. Why? Well, it's because of this. The people weren't committed to the cause. Some people who had political influence and muscle were committed to the cause, but they were never able to get the support of the people in the United States. Even the authorities weren't that supportive of it and they were willing to overlook certain things and so the illegal sale of liquor flourished and created all kinds of other social evils. In 1933, came the 21st amendment, which overturned the 18th amendment and did away with the outlaw of the sale of liquor.

I think this is instructive to us. I think we should have learned our lesson then. As Dale has put it, we are to be busy fishing fish, not cleaning up the fishpond and they attempted to clean up the fishpond. It becomes very difficult to clean up the fishpond when the fishpond does not want to be cleaned up. They tend to react against this, which creates problems, which produces the opposite of a peaceful and tranquil life in all godliness and dignity. We can divert an awful lot of energy away from what we are called to do to things that we are not called to do like attempting to bring a moral life to our society. We are to bring God's word and the gospel to society and hopefully more people will accept it and change, and in that, people will be better off.

Is there any expectation that society will change en masse? Of course not, because the way is broad and the way is wide that leads to destruction and many are those who find it, according to Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14, but the way is narrow that leads to life. Because we will never be the majority, our ability to influence will always be limited and we will find resistance. If we are not careful, the resistance will be so great against us that we will become on the wrong end of the stick and that could become a concern particularly when churches begin to mobilize for political action. In and of itself, it's not wrong but being careful to conduct ourselves properly so that we don't end up with backlash is a concern.

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We want to live a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. A godly, dignified life. Godliness refers to our attitude as seen by God. Our internal character, that's what godliness is. Dignity refers to our conduct as seen by others. So as the people of the world see us, we should be above reproach. We should not have accusations hurled at us. People get very upset if they feel they are being manipulated to do something that they don't want to be doing.

It doesn't just tell us why we should pray for kings and all who are in authority, but it gives us even more information about what the purpose of living a tranquil and quiet life is and that comes from verse 3 to verse 7. "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. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time. And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

How do we please our governing authorities? What is pleasing in the sight of God? Our prayer and supplication for men, our serenity of living a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity is what is pleasing in the sight of God. God is pleased with our supplication, with our serenity, and He is pleased with our salvation. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God.

God our savior desires all men to be saved, but here is the paradox; all men are not saved. If God desires all men to be saved wouldn't you think that all men would be saved, isn't God able to bring this about. This is not because God is unable. God can bring this about if He chose. He desires all men to be saved, but He also desires something else. God desires something else beyond all men being saved because if He only desired all men being saved they would be. Just like you having different desires there are different desires that God has and one desire is for all men to be saved.

You might say that there must be something else that God desires or else all men would be saved, and we know that's not the case. The scriptures abundantly speak of people that are destined for destruction. It even describes that. This is not man's freedom to choose God; this is something else. It is not man's freedom to choose God for man is unable. Some people would say that God desiring that all men to be saved as men having the freedom to choose. There are many passages that speak on this and it has been taught here before, but there is a fundamental problem with men having the freedom to choose and leaving it at that. If they just had the freedom to choose.

Romans 3:10-18 says something that would capsule what their choice would be, "as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, AND THE PATH OF PEACE HAVE THEY NOT KNOWN." "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES." It describes what man's choice would be if they did choose. They would not choose God. They would freely rebel against Him and there would be no one saved.

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Here is the dilemma. If it is not man's freedom to choose God that is the highest priority for God, what is the highest desire? What is that something else, above all, that God desires? He desires His glory.

Romans, chapter nine teaches this through out the whole chapter, but I will read just a portion of it. ROMANS 9:22- 23, "What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory."

For some reason, in his wisdom, God has designed some to be saved out of the mass of humanity, for His glory; and He doesn't give us complete revelation about all of this. We have to come to the realization that His desire for His glory must be greater than His desire for all men to be saved. When we see the contrast between those who are rescued and delivered for salvation, and those who are not, we can see that God intends that for His glory.

As we continue with this purpose of why Christ came, we can see the plan of authority. The plan of authority first speaks of who Christ is. There is one God and one mediator also between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Who is Christ? He is a mediator. He is the priest, the high priest who intercedes between God and man. He is our go between. Apart from Him we would be forever estranged from God, but He mediates between us. There is only one; there is no other. He is it. It also speaks of His humanity. In order for this mediation to be accomplished, Christ needed to be incarnate and live and dwell among us as a man to be offered up for sin.

There is one mediator and one God, God our savior, who is also Christ, our savior. What did Christ do? He gave Himself a ransom for all. He came to earth to die, to give Himself as a payment for sin. Mark 10:45, the key verse in the gospel of Mark says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Christ gave Himself as a payment for sin. That is how He is a mediator for all.

Now there is a bit of a theological debate whether Christ died for all, or if Christ died for some. Some will believe that Christ's death effectiveness was only for some, so therefore, He only died for those. They will use John 10 that says I lay down my life for the sheep, meaning He only gave his life for the sheep. The problem here is that there are other verses that say He gave his life for the sheep and others too. So, while it's true that He gave His life for the sheep, it's also true that He gave His life for all. This passage shows us that Christ's atonement is unlimited, as opposed to limited. It is unlimited meaning it is for all people.

There are other verses that support this, in fact there are quite a surprising number of verses that support this.

John 1:29, "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

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John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

1 Timothy 4:10, "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers." He is the savior of all men, uniquely to believers, but He is fundamentally the savior of all men.

Hebrews 2:9, "But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." His death was for everyone according to Hebrews 2:9.

2 Peter 2:1 is another verse that says His death was for all. "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. These people here are described as denying the master whom bought them. That's redemption; He bought them.

Finally, 1 John 2:2, "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." These are direct statements. This doesn't mean that His death is effective for everyone to be saved, just that His death has been given for everyone. He died for the whole world, but only some will receive that based on His grace.

We should be careful not to extrapolate the doctrine of election out to the nth degree. If therefore He chooses some before the foundation of the earth, His death is only efficient for those people; that's not what the scriptures teach. Even if we can't tie it up in a neat package logically, this is what it says. His death is for all, but is only effective for some.

When did Christ do this? At the proper time, He gave himself as a ransom for all. He bought us back. He paid for our sins. He is the testimony born at the proper time. At the proper time He died for all. This was ordained before hand. The book of Daniel teaches that He came at the proper time. It is even prophesied as to when He would come. Galatians 4:4 says *in due time He came*. Just at the proper time He came to die for the sins of the world.

What should we do in light of this? We should pray for our governing authorities that we could live a peaceful and tranquil life in all godliness and dignity. Why? So that this message that God desires all men to be saved; that there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, should go out from us. We should proclaim this with authority. We have been given authority to proclaim this. Jesus said it this way in John 20:21. "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

If we are Disciples of Christ, we are sent, as the Father has sent Jesus, into the world to deliver this message. He has sent us and we have authority to deliver this message. If we are not careful, we can become distracted, and undermine our ability to deliver this message well. If we can lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity being above reproach, then perhaps we can gain a hearing among people who God desires to be saved. That is our agenda. We are sent into the world to proclaim that Jesus is the mediator, the one mediator between God and man, and we must be busy about doing this.

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We are sent, as Paul was, as a teacher of the Gentiles, in faith and truth. In truth, meaning that we have the truth, that people need to accept the truth, believe the truth, yield to the truth; but in faith also. In faith, meaning that you have to trust what God says is the best thing, is the right thing. When He says things that are of a high priority, we should follow that plan, even if it seems to us that we have a better plan. If all God did was say just love people as you love yourself and leave it at that we would not have instruction about how to live a wise life; how to love people well. We have been given a lot of instruction about what is a priority, what is to be valued. In faith we need to adopt this instruction and not just leave it to ourselves to think of what's the most important thing I should do. We should study what God's Word elevates as the most important thing for us to do, and be setting that as a priority and trust that His will, will be achieved. So, let's give our selves to the Lord, and go out in faith and truth, trusting His way rather than our way.

Let's pray together shall we. Lord, we thank You for Your will that has been delivered to us, that You have indeed been the savior of all men, that you have been a ransom for the sin of the many. Lord, we ask that You would help us to be a messenger of this. That we would be able to share this truth with people and bring that to people, well, with dignity, with an ability to be clear in this. Lord, we pray for opportunities to abound for each one of us to be able to be a representative of you, to explain who the one mediator is between God and man. We pray, Lord, that we will not be distracted in this, that we will be busy about this high priority, and we pray for our governing authorities that they will continue to allow us the freedom to do this. We thank You for the country that we live in. We thank you that we have the freedom to do this without opposition. We pray this will continue and we pray that we will be able to flourish in our ability to share You and Your truth with those of the world. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.