

1st Timothy 2:1-7

1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, 6 who gave himself a ransom for all — this was attested at the right time. 7 For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

The scriptures tell us several different times what it is that God desires. Here in First Timothy is one of those occasions. Tradition has it that this was written by the Apostle Paul. Many scholars dispute the authorship due to writing style, doctrine, and word choices. The Apostle Paul spent three years in Ephesus but a problem of false teaching developed that challenged the church leadership. Timothy joined Paul on his second missionary journey. When Paul could no longer stay in Ephesus, Timothy stayed behind and was put in charge of the church there.

Today's Scripture is a letter to Timothy that teaches about behavior of the members of the church towards one another and outsiders. It states some universal principals of our Christian faith: there is one God, one mediator, Christ gave his life as a ransom for all, and God desires the truth and that all are to be saved.

The first duty is prayer. There are four words used to describe prayers: supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings. There is no distinction made between them. The church is instructed to pray for everyone. This is a significant lesson for us. Prayers are to be made for everyone because God's salvation is offered to all people. Christ's death is for everyone that chooses to accept it. However, to pray for the emperor was problematic. This was something that most of the people did not want to do. Their concern was self-centered and as a consequence they rejected Timothy. Their actions and attitudes went against God because God desires that all people be saved. The Good News is for everyone including sinners. Therefore, the Christian concern is for everyone, no one is to be excluded. All prayer is to be made to God. Since God is for all people, we are to pray for our enemies, not against them.

The best example is Jesus. I would like for you to take the time to imagine him now. Imagine you can see him with your own eyes, up on the cross, bloody, and dyeing. Imagine him there crucified with two criminals. Both of them are in much better shape than Jesus because he endured severe flogging. At that moment you see the worst of the worst of humanity. At this time, when he is experiencing extreme cruelty Jesus says "forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." I'm going to repeat that for emphasis. At that time, when Jesus is suffering cruelty and dyeing at the hands of evil is when he asks for forgiveness for the very people that are doing this to him. Unfortunately some people do not want to hear about God. Some people reject God's love and forgiveness. But God loves them anyway. Therefore, the Christian is to commit to loving them and the Christian prays for those who reject God's love. As Jesus prayed for everyone, even his persecutors, we are to pray for everyone, even those that we disagree

with. God desires everyone to be saved and God desires that all people have a chance to know the truth.

Public worship is a matter of fellowship and unity. All people of the Christian faith are to be united in the worship of God. As the church accepts everyone, our prayers are to have a larger scope than individualism. God desires all people to be saved. God desires that all people come to knowledge of the truth. If we truly love everyone as is biblical mandated, then we intervene on behalf of another, and we pray for everyone. Our God is everyone's God. What we typically pray for are our own desires. But these are typically the same things that God desires for everyone. Therefore, I must pray for the well being and salvation of others, even those that I disagree with.

In the realm of contemporary society, I hear people express concerns about how they disagree with certain politicians. We all have different opinions and Christians are challenged when we live under a government that we do not approve of. But there is one thing that we can do that is in agreement with one another. We can all pray for those in power. The Christian is relieved and lead to peace when summoned to pray for others, regardless of who they are within the realm of our relationships. So, we pray for our leaders regardless of political affiliation. It is right, proper, and it is in accord with God and our Savior. We will never agree on political platforms. However, instead of disagreeing, we can focus on what we can agree upon, to pray for our leaders. God seeks to save us and God seeks to save them. What we can do instead of anger, agitation, and frustration, is bring to God our concern for others because the one true God is for all of humanity. The challenge for us in life is to overcome the things that lure us away from God. The estrangement is one sided. God does not need to be reconciled to humans; people need to be brought back to God. God cared enough to make a difference. God gave the life of Jesus to reconcile all of us.