

PRAYING FOR OUR LEADERS (REDUX)

I. [1 Timothy 2:1-4](#) [Titus 3:1-2](#) [1 Peter 2:13-17](#)

A. From 54 AD to 68 AD, Rome was ruled by Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, a.k.a. Nero... (Here's a brief summary of Nero's rule...)

- 1) History does not look kindly upon him.
- 2) His reign is best described as one of extravagance and tyranny.
- 3) Initially he was very popular among the lower class.
- 4) He built theaters, promoted athletic events, even raced chariots himself, though some claim he bribed the judges just to win.
- 5) Some record that he craved attention, was obsessed by popularity.
- 6) He wrote poetry, played the lyre, sang publicly (perhaps not well).
- 7) He won a war, negotiated peace with the Parthian Empire, improved diplomatic relations with Greece, started the first Roman-Jewish War which would be finished by a successor with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
- 8) Nero, many believe, torched Rome and perhaps played his lyre as it burned for 5 or 6 days. (*17th century saying: Nero fiddled while Rome burned.*) He famously blamed the fire on Christians, persecution erupted, and Nero had them beheaded, crucified, fed to wild animals, and covered with pitch and set afire.
- 9) Nero was ruthless--executed his mother, his adopted brother, two wives, and two well known apostles in 68 AD, Peter (crucified upside down) and Paul (beheaded). Nero would take his own life that same year following a coup.
- 10) Through most church history, Nero was considered the antiChrist.

B. In the heart of Nero's reign, God was not silent and He spoke to us through Paul and Peter about relating to our government leaders...

C. [1 Timothy 2:1-4](#) (NIV) Paul writes to Timothy in 64 AD, in the heart of Nero's reign: **1** I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— **2** for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. **3** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, **4** who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

D. [Titus 3:1-2](#) (NIV) Likewise Paul writes to Titus during this same time period:

1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, **2** to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

E. [1 Peter 2:13-17](#) (NIV) Then Peter exhorts the church: **13** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, **14** or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. **15** For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. **16** Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. **17** Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

F. Clearly God has not been silent when it comes to how we should treat our leaders, regardless of how they've come to power. We are urged to:

- 1) Pray for them and be thankful for them...
 - 2) Be subject and obedient to them--ready to do whatever is good...
 - 3) Avoid slander, being peaceable and considerate, showing humility...
 - 4) Show respect, maintain love, fear God, and show honor to the king...
- G. In case you missed the election, we have a new President and Vice President.

You may have voted for the new President or for someone else. Whether you view him as Washington or Nero, we have our instructions from the Lord.

H. [Daniel 2:20-23](#) (NKJV) After God told Daniel the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had and the interpretation of it: **20** Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. **21** And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. **22** He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him." (Elsewhere in Daniel it says: "...the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes..." (See Daniel 4:17; 25; 32;))

I. Sometimes God changes the heart of a king or leader. Sometimes God uses a bad leader to change the hearts of a nation. All we need to do is look at the kings of Israel and Judah to see some of the ways God works. What has history taught us about the sovereign hand of our Lord? (e.g. John Quincy Adams & Abraham Lincoln.)

J. All this past week there've been confirmation hearings in Congress for potential cabinet members of the newly elected president. Some of the questions are insightful and probing. Some questions are pure political posturing. It

certainly behooves us to be praying as this process unfolds. Remember we are urged to pray for those in leadership, from the president right on down to our mayor.

K. Daniel 4:34-35 (NIV) Following Nebuchadnezzar's 7 years of insanity: 34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified Him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. **35** All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: "What have You done?"

L. Remember this: No election changes what we as believers are called to do--live out The Great Commandment and carry out The Great Commission. Love and the Gospel remain our purpose. This is true for Christians in America but also true for Christians in Russia and China and Mexico and Ghana and all around the globe.

M. Before I close us out with prayer, I have a confession to make. While most of you won't remember, I preached this very same sermon previously, 8 years ago in November 2008, right after the election of President Barack Obama. The words are as true for us now as they were then.

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NIV)

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Film Clips & Other Links

"If My People" (2 Chronicles 7:14) Promise Keepers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NHUJOV7nms>

John Quincy Adams Mentors Abraham Lincoln - David Barton
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhtkAO9PUE8>

"To Serve" (Excerpt from "The Drum Major Instinct" by Martin Luther King, Jr.)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEUqj4SmlZQ>

Pray for Kings and All in High Positions - John Piper (Sermon Text & Recording)

<http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/pray-for-kings-and-all-in-high-positions>

Bonus Stuff

Proverbs 24:21-22 (ESV)

21 My son, fear the Lord and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, **22** for disaster will arise suddenly from them, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?

Jeremiah 29:4-7 (NIV)

4 This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: **5** "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. **6** Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. **7** Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Romans 13:1-7 (ESV)

1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. **2** Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. **3** For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, **4** for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. **5** Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. **6** For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. **7** Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Psalms 146 (NIV)

1 Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. **2** I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. **3** Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. **4** When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. **5** Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, **6** the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them--the Lord, who remains faithful forever. **7** He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, **8** the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. **9** The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but He frustrates the ways of the wicked. **10** The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord.

Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

Favorite Quotes by Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Whatever your life's work is, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better. If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, like Beethoven composed music; sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.'"

- Martin Luther King, Jr. ("*Facing the Challenge of a New Age*," Speech by Martin Luther King Jr., December 3, 1956 at Holt Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.)

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

- Martin Luther King, Jr. ("*The Drum Major Instinct*" Speech delivered on February 4, 1968 Atlanta Georgia...)

"There was a time when the church was very powerful in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society... But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early

church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century."

- Martin Luther King, Jr. (Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963...)

"The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But... the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'"

- Martin Luther King, Jr. ("*I've Been To The Mountain Top*" Speech delivered in Memphis, TN., April 3, 1968. He was assassinated the next day.)

"Hatred paralyzes life, love releases it. Hatred confuses life, love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life, love illuminates it."

- Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther, King, Jr.*