

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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PRAYING FOR POLITICIANS

PART 2 OF 2

THE CONTENT OF PRAYER FOR POLITICIANS

PRAY FOR ALL MEN, ESPECIALLY LEADERS.

In 1 Timothy 2:1,2 Paul tells us that we ought to pray for all types of men. We ought to pray for men in all kinds of groups and for all men without distinction. But in particular we ought to pray for those who are in positions of authority in government. Paul prayed for the king. We are to pray for city councilors, mayors, members of parliament, premiers and prime ministers. Leaders who have the opportunity to display their folly on the world stage ought especially to be on the hearts of God's people. We ought to pray for leaders of countries where the church is persecuted. Being informed about such countries is the first step. Then fervent prayer about such situations must follow.

We might be tempted to leave out of our prayers leaders we consider to be vile. It is sobering to remember that the "king" to whom Paul referred was Nero. Now Nero, while he may not have 'fiddled' while Rome burned, did greet the news about the fire with some glee. He was not averse to 'eliminating' his own family members and was the first emperor to persecute the family of God. Pray for this man, Paul tells these people. Years later, as Paul is about to be beheaded in Nero's Rome, do you think he would have backtracked on this instruction? I think not! He would, in all likelihood, have called all the more urgently for fervent prayer for the soul of this man. Sadly, Nero, as far as we know, died in his sin, lamenting the fact that in him the world was losing a great actor. We ought to pray for leaders of our day before they

too die in their sin. No matter the wickedness of the particular politician, we ought to pray that God would save him or her. When you watch the mayor of Toronto frolicking with degenerates on the streets of Toronto in a homosexual parade, what is your response? If it is not to pray for him (and them), then your response is less than Biblical. Remember that Jesus, standing before a great and wicked city, His heart full of love and compassion, lamented: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing' (Matthew 23:37)! They killed and stoned those whom Jesus had sent to them. But love and compassion for poor sinners evokes this heart-wrenching lament. Love for sinners, even the most vile of politicians, must drive us to our knees, remembering that 'the vilest of sinners who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives'. Has it occurred to you that it is possible that one day Saddam Hussein, George W. Bush, Osama Bin Laden and Tony Blair may all sit down at the wedding feast of the Lamb? If it has not, perhaps it is because you have not been praying for them.

PRAY FOR THE DESPERATE NEED.

The word translated 'supplication' especially emphasizes the idea of 'need, lack'. You come and you ask because of a need you have or a need someone else has.

What need there is in this world! With the winds of war blowing hot and controversy swirling around his administration's handling of the matter of Iraq's 'weapons of mass de-

struction', U.S. President, George W. Bush, met with several preachers on February 13, 2003. Among the ministers was Max Lucado who asked the President how he could seem so calm and peaceful in the midst of such stress. The President's reply was: 'I'm feeling stronger now than I've ever been in my life. And the reason is because every person in America is praying for me. When I stay on my knees, that's when I have power.' He was then asked how he would like the ministers to pray for him and Mr. Bush asked that they pray for 'clarity of mind for himself so that he might make wise decisions' and also for his wife and daughters, as he is concerned about their safety. How refreshing, and even startling to see a politician who understands the need for prayer and the need for others to pray for him! For the most part, however, politicians do not see the need and it is thus incumbent upon Christians to do so. Let us survey our national scene. We see an aggressive and militant homosexual lobby and their appalling efforts to destroy a Judeo-Christian concept of the family. We observe rampant immorality on every level. We find that the breakdown of the family has reached epidemic proportions and we grieve over the fact that 55% of children born in Quebec are born out of wedlock.¹ The stunning reality is brought home again to our minds that we live in a country that has no law regarding abortion, and that the slaughter of the unborn continues unabated. Pragmatism and political correctness guide decision making at every level, and knowledge of God and Biblical wisdom are not only rare in society, they are not considered worth pursuing. Amidst all these concerns, the crying need is surely for politicians to be won to Christ. We need to pray not only for wisdom and understanding for politicians but for conversion. Luther was reputed to have said: 'I would rather be governed by a competent Turk than an incompetent Christian'. We will pray for competence but we want much more. We want to see conversions! This is God's concern. This is what God desires. 'For this is good and ac-

ceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (verses 3,4). Oh that government officials might indeed be 'God's ministers to you for good' (Romans 13:4). But the deeper longing of our hearts is to see them become monuments to His saving grace.

In light of this we should pray for politicians who are Christians, that God would endow them with wisdom, shrewdness, understanding and competence beyond their natural abilities. We should pray that God would grant them boldness and courage in their witness, preserve them unspotted in the often sleazy world of politics and keep their eye true in the murky processes of political wrangling. Further, we should pray for churches and individual Christians who have contact with politicians at every level that they would not simply seek to promote good legislation but that they would promote the kingdom amongst these needy folk.

PRAY FOR SPECIFIC PEOPLE AND ITEMS.

The word "supplications" in verse one means "the petitions for the fulfillment of certain definite needs". Particular needs and particular requests are in view here. We should be particular whenever we pray and especially when we pray for politicians and the political world. Perhaps you are personally acquainted with individuals in politics - pray faithfully for them! We all know of particular people on the provincial and national scene - pray for them by name. Do we at times succumb to the notion that people like Mr. Chretien are beyond the pale of God's saving grace? God forbid! Does not the conversion of Richard Nixon's hatchet man, Charles Colson, remind us that God can save anybody? Read his book *Born Again* and be reminded that the hallowed halls of political power are not beyond the reach of God's mighty hand. More significant than that is God's gracious dealings with the most powerful man in the world during the heyday of the

-continued inside back cover

FAMILIES IN FOCUS

DEAREST ASHLEY, CHILD OF THE COVENANT



Dear Ashley,

I am unable to sleep tonight as I think about your big day tomorrow, so I decided to write you a letter. It will be a number of years before you will be able to read and understand this. When you do, I hope it will be an encouragement to you. Although it was only six weeks ago we brought you home from the hospital, what will be done to you tomorrow will be one of the most significant events in your life.

Not only were your mother and I not raised in Christian homes, but also as young Christians we did not have any appreciation for infant baptism. Your mother was baptized when she became a Christian in high school. Although I was baptized as an infant, my parents at the time did not have the slightest notion of what that involved. For them it was a cultural thing. When I became a Christian through the ministry of Reformed University Fellowship, I thought I should be baptized. The campus minister, however, showed me that the significance of my baptism did not depend on my parents or the minister. As long as it was Christian baptism it was valid. Nevertheless, even though I was not re-baptized, I did not appreciate the wonder or uniqueness of infant baptism.

The rich significance of infant baptism began to dawn on us only as we prepared for your birth. When Pastor Perkins baptizes you tomorrow morning, God is declaring that you are a part of the covenant people - a member of the church. Your baptism signifies that you stand in a special relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, who by His own baptism identified with His elect people. All those who are baptized are set apart as belonging to Him. Ashley, every person stands before God in a covenant relationship. Either he is under the old covenant made with Adam and thus obligated to obey God perfectly or suffer eternal punishment. Or he is under the covenant of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ who perfectly kept the first covenant, and by His death paid the penalty for our failure to keep it.

The Bible teaches that one enters into covenant with Christ in one of two ways: by profession of faith like Abraham, the Philippian jailer and mom; or by birth like Ishmael, Isaac, the children of the Philippian jailer and me. Either way, baptism is God's appointed symbol of membership. It reminds us that by nature we are dead in our sins and trespasses and must be regenerated by the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit. In baptism, we are ceremonially cleansed, because we are in covenantal union with Christ. In your baptism, Ashley, God lays claim on you and obligates you to keep His covenant. You keep His covenant as you believe in Christ as Savior and seek to please Him by keeping His commandments.

Does your baptism guarantee that you will be renewed by the Holy Spirit? No, it doesn't. Of course, Mom and I pray that you are already regenerated and will grow up never knowing a day that you were not trusting in Christ alone for your salvation. But only God can grant you a new heart. Sweetheart, if you have been renewed, it will show itself in your faith, love, and obedience. If not, your baptism will be a constant reminder of God's mercy in providing a Savior and of your need to repent and believe. If you were to continue in unbelief, your baptism would be a witness against you that you were a covenant breaker and your condemnation would be all the more severe.

At this point you may wonder, "What use is baptism?" Paul anticipates this question in Romans 9:4,5 as he depicts the benefits of covenant membership of the old covenant people. Actually, he begins to answer the question in Romans 3:1-4, "What is the benefit of being a Jew?" Paul says that one important privilege is the possession of God's word. However, he temporarily abandons the discussion of Israel's benefits until he has dealt in detail with the true method of salvation. In Chapter 9 he returns to discuss the covenant benefits that belonged to Israel. After having expressed his great burden for their conversion, Paul lists their privileges. First, they were members of the covenant community "kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, --- whose are the fathers." Further, they were the sons of God "to whom belong the adoption." As such they enjoyed the physical manifestations of God's presence, "the glory." Moreover, God had bound Himself to them in contractual agreements by "the covenants." They had the special revelation of God's word, His worship, and the promise of pardon with the gift of the Holy Spirit, "the giving of the law and the temple service and the

promises." And best of all the Savior would descend from them and come for them, "from whom is the Christ according to the flesh."

Ashley, as a child of the covenant these benefits are yours. You belong to the true Israel which is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are declared to be a daughter of God and so we teach you to sing "Jesus loves me." You live in a supernatural environment. Christ by His spirit is in our home where we live not by bread alone but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. You will see what it means to live by faith, and you will learn how God provides for us as we pray with and for you and teach you to pray. We will remind you regularly that God has obligated himself to be your God, thus you are to believe in Christ and obey. We will teach you the scriptures. You will worship at home and with the church on the Lord's Day. You will learn God's promises and will be taught to heed their conditions. Therefore, we will discipline you so that sin might be uprooted from your heart and you will learn to obey.

For these reasons, tomorrow morning we will take vows and make promises to God when you are baptized. By our vows we will claim the promise of the covenant on your behalf and mom and I will acknowledge our responsibility to raise you according to the covenant.

All of this is wrapped up in baptism. As God pictures your union with Christ through cleansing, He assures us that He has made His covenant with you as well as with us and that He will work through His covenant in administering His salvation.

It is now quite late. I must try to sleep. I love you my precious little one. But what is even more wonderful, God loves you.

Love, Papa
- written by Dr. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. Reprinted from The PCA, June 1990

YOUTH'S CORNER - THE STORY OF RUTH

- | | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| a. NAOMI | b. FIELD | c. CHILION | d. MAHLON | e. KINSMAN |
| f. BOAZ | g. REDEEM | h. REAPERS | i. MOAB | j. ELIMELECH |
| k. GLEAN | l. DAVID | m. GRANDFATHER | n. RUTH | o. SHOE |
| p. SON | q. GOD | r. BUY | s. MY | t. OBED |
| u. MARA | v. EARS | w. GO | x. SHEAVES | |

Because there was a famine in Bethlehem, a man named ____, his wife ____, and their two sons, ____ and ____ went to the country of ____. The family lived in Moab for some time. First the father died and then the two sons.

The mother was sad and lonely and made plans to return to Bethlehem. Her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and ____ started to walk back with her. Naomi said, "Go back, ____ daughters."

Only Orpah turned around. Ruth went along with Naomi to Bethlehem. Ruth promised to love ____ and Naomi's people. When they got to Bethlehem, Naomi said to her friends, "Do not call me Naomi, call me ____, for the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me."

A ____ of Naomi's husband lived in Bethlehem. He was a very rich man named ____. He had many fields of corn and barley and the ____ were busy gathering the ____.

M	A	R	A	G	S	N	O	D
O	A	D	E	B	O	I	G	H
A	Y	H	E	I	N	D	R	T
B	U	G	L	E	A	N	A	U
O	B	I	I	O	Y	A	N	R
A	H	E	M	H	N	M	D	E
C	D	A	E	S	A	S	F	A
F	I	E	L	D	O	N	A	P
Z	V	A	E	T	M	I	T	E
A	A	R	C	E	I	K	H	R
O	D	S	H	E	A	V	E	S
B	O	M	E	E	D	E	R	A

Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me now go to the ____ and ____ of corn." Naomi said, "____, my daughter."

Boaz noticed the newcomer and soon learned that she was the Moabitish girl who had come back with Naomi. He asked a close relative if he could ____ Elimelech's land. The man could not so Boaz made plans to ____ it. He took off his ____ to confirm the sale. Soon Ruth became the wife of Boaz. A little ____ was born to them and they named him ____. He was the ____ of ____.



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

LINKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

There are two main reasons why we want to get to know people living around us. The first is that they might be saved from personal disaster by putting their trust in the Lord Jesus; and the second reason is that due to the determined work of the Holy Spirit in our own lives we want to do them good. Both reasons are just reflections of our Heavenly Father's character. His desire is that all might be saved and He causes His sun to shine on the just and unjust.

Theoretically it would be possible to evangelize locally without getting to know anyone. We could put tracts through doors, use the local press or radio or the internet to effectively and vividly present gospel truth. We could alleviate physical need by sending a cheque to help the homeless in our town or make a bank transfer for missionary work on the other side of the world. Do we really need to involve ourselves in other people's lives with all the work and disappointment it involves? Yes, we do!

Playing our part in our local communities is essential because God himself is the perfect community. The three persons of the Godhead live together in perfect love, freedom and harmony. Likewise, it wasn't good for Adam to be alone. And for us, heavenly bliss will not be an isolated cottage on the shores of some lake: it will be a city full of people.

Modern work practice means long hours in a competitive market. Coming home from their employment, people want to shut the front door and enjoy the fruit of their work: cable TV, a nice garden etc. Life has become privatized. The attitude is that of keeping to yourself. The local church has to buck this trend. Forty years ago children walked to school, women spent their money in the local shops two or three times a week and the men were employed near to home. Nowadays we get into our metal boxes

and commute - to work, the shops, and to church. How can we serve our neighbour in this kind of environment?

Every local church has two ready made links with the community. One is her building. Communities are positive about their church buildings. They speak of births, marriages and deaths; of a time past when things were better. New church buildings are valued too. They say "we're relevant, we belong to society now, we understand the problems you face to-day".

Whether we like it or not, the church building is still seen as God's space, and His reputation is linked with those particular stones and roof tiles. No church building is perfect but all have their assets. It might be in the size of its kitchen, its architecture, its special history or its reputation for friendliness. Whatever our resources, how can we use them to say, to the passer-by, "We want to serve you."? We cannot say that with closed doors. At best the closed door means sorry, we're unavailable just now; at worst it means that we don't care. It would be tragic for someone to believe that the Lord's people did not care about their difficulties or have the resources to help. If our building is only open for four hours in a 168 hour week, we have to ask if we are wisely using the resources God has entrusted to us.

How do we get people through our church door so that the building can be of use to others? Who passes our door - office workers? Prostitutes? Children? The unemployed?

Children are the easiest to invite in. They come with open minds and natural curiosity. Mother and Toddler groups, nurseries, after-school clubs, holiday Bible clubs are enjoyed by children and appreciated by their parents. They slowly break down barriers and

erode prejudices. They set examples of truthfulness and respect and through Bible stories children learn that the good guy wins in the end.

Women too will come. They come to meet each other and they know intuitively that the material "things" can't satisfy at the deepest level. They appreciate the help of friends and this spills over into a willingness to turn to God. They're prepared to give the church a chance.

Persuading men to come to church, certainly in working class areas, is difficult. They see church as the place for hypocrites - and middle class ones at that. The working class man's philosophy is that you can be a good Christian without going to church. Supper evenings with their wives, family fun nights after holiday Bible clubs may be ways to draw men inside. Regular pastoral visits during a time of crisis can also bring some response.

The second and more valuable and important link with the community is the people within the congregation. As members of the church family we need to be taught to face outwards rather than inwards. It is so much easier and safer to socialize among ourselves. We argue that after all the years of youth clubs or children's work, none of the young people have become members. We have managed to have a nice home by being careful with our money, why should we help these layabouts? What will the folks say? Why should we take the risk and spend the time and money? But we have no other option.

Amazingly I belong to Jesus Christ. He was tortured horribly and totally forsaken when He gave up His life for me. The only thing I brought to the relationship was my sin. There were no assets and no potential. But how different things are now! I live in His love, His acceptance, and know His daily care.

One day, not too far away, I will be asked by this God what I did with my days. I won't be judged by what I longed for or dreamt of. I'll be judged

on what I've actually done and what I've said. The judgement will be absolutely fair for this Judge knows every circumstance. Oh to hear Him say "well done, good and faithful servant."

Pray for the opportunity to serve someone. Chat about what you've read in the Bible this morning or a particular answer to prayer. Many other cultures in the world are better at this than we are. Gossiping the gospel is the norm and the church grows. We don't have to use the language of the theological text book, or be able to accurately summarise Zechariah's visions in 3 minutes but the promise to pray about a situation is always an encouragement.

Perhaps we need to help out in a local voluntary organization or do more walking - not to loose weight - but to meet people. Learn to see interruptions when working outside as opportunities. Pop in with some baking when someone is ill, lend out the ladders and chat positively about our church family. We know it's not perfect but God can be found there.

Linking with the community is not a parachute drop. Missions are great opportunities for a congregation and are blessed by God, but they play a small part in the work of the church. The brunt of the slow work of reaching the local community lies with the members who are out and about everyday. It's interesting that the people who are the main links with the local population are not usually the leaders within the church, nor the one's with the biggest income or even the healthiest bodies. Yet such people have an extraordinary position of privilege within God's family. They are God's means of communicating his love to the lost.

Today's outsider is not interested if Christianity is true - he wants to know if it works. Each weekend it's good to look back and take stock. How far have I met the guidelines of Matthew 25? "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat" - have I taken an elderly person their shopping? "I was thirsty and you gave me

something to drink” - have I made a cup of tea for the young fellow selling dusters that I don’t want? “I was a stranger and you invited me in” - have I invited the single mum and her noisy children for Sunday lunch knowing my house will be turned upside down? “I needed clothes and you clothed me” - have I given that \$100 to someone on Income Support? “I was sick and you looked after me” - have I visited someone in a residential home this week? “I was in prison and you came to visit me” - have I even written?

It could be depressing if we were to compare what we are with what we should be. But we need to remind ourselves that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, and that our Creator has lovingly and purposefully placed us in a particular location. You and I are His people in His place.

-condensed from original format, author unknown

PRAYING FOR POLITICIANS

(CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)

Babylonian empire. Read Daniel 4 and see God bringing the great Nebuchadnezzar to his knees and, I believe, to Himself. Or consider Jonah 3 and observe the King of Nineveh as he rises from his throne, lays aside his robe, covers himself with sackcloth and ashes and turns to God. Surely this stirs us to pray for particular people and pray with confidence that God is able to do it!

PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING.

We are to bring supplications, prayers and intercessions to God with thanksgiving (verse 2). I recall arriving in Canada many years ago having, in the providence of God, escaped the seething cauldron of racial hatred and violence in South Africa. I recall profound thankfulness sweeping over me when, as a young man, I became a citizen of this great country. Folk like us felt deeply grateful for the privilege of the vote, for the freedom to walk into any public washroom and not look for a colour sign. I was not a believer then and didn’t really know whom to thank. But we do, do we not? Are we thankful for the freedoms we enjoy in this country? Are we thankful for the liberty to voice our displeasure? Are we thankful for the prosperity with which we can serve God and promote the kingdom? For many years Canada has been recognized as one of the most desirable places in the world to live. Thank the Lord for what you have here.

PRAY FOR A QUIET AND PEACEFUL LIFE.

We ought to pray for politicians, Paul says, in order that we may lead a “quiet and peaceable life” (verse 2). The two words he uses probably suggest the following: peace on the outside (freedom from turmoil brought upon us); peace on the inside (freedom from inner turmoil). And this would be so that the people of God may grow and mature and live a life characterized by all “godliness and reverence” (verse 2). Thank God that, for the most part, we do live a quiet and peaceable life here in Canada. Let us pray that that might continue. We do see disturbing signs of the erosion of these liberties. We have in recent times heard of a Christian couple having their children taken away from them simply because they sought to follow the Biblical admonitions regarding discipline. We have witnessed a Christian school teacher persecuted by authorities because he spoke out against homosexuality, despite his doing so in a most circumspect manner.

We are not guaranteed that our liberties will continue indefinitely. We shall pray that they might and we shall also pray for grace to utilize those liberties in a manner advantageous to the kingdom.

Furthermore, it is incumbent upon believers to pray for brethren throughout the world. Multitudes of Christians throughout the world live in countries where the simple fact of being a

Christian brings untold dangers. Paul Marshall has written a book which he says is about a 'spiritual plague'. The book 'tells of massacre, rape, torture, slavery, beatings, mutilations, and imprisonments. It also tells of pervasive patterns of extortion, harassment, family division, and crippling discrimination in employment and education. The plague affects over two hundred million people with an additional four hundred million suffering from discrimination and legal impediments.'² We need to pray for our Christian brethren in Saudi Arabia, China, Indonesia and so many places throughout the world where governments are failing grievously to be ministers of good to the people (Romans 13:4). God forbid that we should sin against them by failing to pray for them (1 Samuel 12:23). The first step, perhaps, is that we should make ourselves aware of what is going on by reading books such as Marshall's or visiting the many websites that are available.³ Then, in an informed way, pray.

We can see then that the purpose of our prayer that we might lead "quiet and peaceable life" is not that we might float to heaven on flowery beds of ease, but rather as we grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ we might be used for the furthering of the Kingdom. It is not about our comfort, it is about the Kingdom. God wants sinners to be saved. Pray for governments. Pray for peace and politicians so that in that context the cause of Christ might progress and Christians might be free to dedicate themselves to the Lord's work. So, brothers and sisters, pray for politicians.

How many divisions do we have? We have none. But we have a sovereign God with whom nothing is impossible.

-Written by Carl Muller

1 According to University of Montreal research, as reported in the Montreal Gazette.

2 Paul Marshall, *Their Blood Cries Out*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997), p. 4.

3 An example: www.persecution.org

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