

God's Heart for Leaders

Imagine just for a moment if God suddenly removed all the authorities in place over us in their various capacities in government. You might have seen glimpses of it on the news when chaos reigned in Haiti and now in Chile in the aftermath of the earthquakes. When you see that you are reminded that even bad government (Haiti's was vastly corrupt!!!) is better than no government.

This is Paul's point in Romans 13. He is finalizing his letter to a group of people in Rome that existed underneath the Emperor Nero, one of the most ruthless of the Roman emperors. In it he wants to make sure that the people know that every ruler that has ever come to power only gets there because God puts them there (Rom. 13:1; see also Jer. 27:6; Dan. 2:21; John 19:10-11), and He puts them there for the purpose of maintaining order within the culture (Rom. 13:2-7; see also 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Literally, they are "God's servant for your good" (Rom. 13:4).

Think about how crazy that thought must have been to people underneath persecution? You would have to think that this would be so contrary to their thinking? It must have been difficult to see them as "God's servants"? Their heart must have been to complain and question?

You will look long and hard, however, and you won't find a passage that calls God's people to be grippers and complainers because He doesn't want us to whine about those HE has placed in authority over us for our good. And while you won't find God calling us to grumble, you will find Him calling and commanding us to pray.

A few years after his letter to Rome, Paul wrote a letter to his son in the faith, Timothy. They were still under the reign of Nero, and this was Paul's message regarding government:

"First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people, even for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Such prayer for all is good and welcomed before God our Savior, since He wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

He wanted the people that Timothy pastored to pray in all kinds of ways! He wanted God's people to beg God with the mentality that He not only puts these leaders in power, but that He can move the heart of the king as He wishes (Ezra 6:22; see also Exodus in regards to Pharaoh). And God desires that we pray for an atmosphere of peace and quiet (as opposed to chaos and anarchy) so that we can live lives of godliness and dignity.

Those two words are key to our prayer life. "Godliness" conveys the idea of having respect for God and what He is doing. It is fully joining Him in what He is doing, not doing our thing and inviting Him along. It is an attitude that understands that this story is about Him and we are merely supporting actors. Paul couples this word with "dignity." That can sometimes convey snobbish or pretentious,

but what Paul wants the people to exhibit to the world is poise; this composure of joy that believes that God is truly in control. But why does God want His people to live life like this?

The purpose of this prayer is that in the heart of God, “He wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (v. 4). God is withholding unimaginable evil all around the world through good and evil leaders so that His people might make God known. He gave us our political and economic environment in the US not to waste our lives on satiating ourselves with possessions, toys, and entertainment, but instead to find unimaginable joy in joining Him completely in what He is about everyday on this planet with confidence and faith.

Praying God’s Heart for Leaders

- When is the last time you thanked God for the order that He provides so that chaos is held at bay and an atmosphere is provided for the gospel? One way in which God bridles out of control evil is through the leaders He places in power. Can you imagine what it would be like to live in anarchy? Spend time by yourself, with others, or maybe your family thanking God for our leaders both past and present.
- Have you ever complained about those God has placed in authority on a global, national, statewide, or local level? We are to voice opposition to leaders when they go against the heart of God (for example, the killing of the unborn), but grumbling against them over taxes (see Rom. 13:6) or their philosophy of governing (Nero didn’t have a great philosophy) is grumbling against God. Take time to examine your heart in regards to our various leaders. Is there any sin you need to confess to God so that your prayers won’t be hindered?
- Spend time praying for our leaders in regards to the environment they provide for the gospel. Beg God to give them wisdom in regards to containing evil and chaos and providing peace and quiet that opens the doors for God’s people to live effectively who they are in front of their friends, families, and neighbors. For example, think about the violence and drugs that have caused chaos in the inner city of Los Angeles. Intercede on behalf of the mayor and city council that God might open a wide door for the gospel to the poor and outcast in that environment.
- Pray for yourself, your believing friends and family, the believers of Cornerstone, and the Christians around Simi Valley and the Los Angeles area that we wouldn’t squander the peace and quiet, but that we would instead radically and joyfully take advantage of it with lives caught up in all that God is doing not only here, but around the world. Do you believe that God could stir His people to live in such a way that people all around us would embrace the gospel? Do you believe God might move us to pray for the president, the governor, or the mayor, that they would choose to follow Jesus?