

Worship Material
Get real!
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 21st September

Begin with an opening prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before you today
with gratitude for the gifts of community and fellowship.
As we gather in your name, we invite your Holy Spirit
to be among us, guiding our thoughts, words, and actions.
Open our ears to hear your voice,
and our eyes to see your work among us.
Amen.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Bible notes

1 Timothy hints at turbulent times. The first chapter ends with a reference to an internal dispute leading to 'shipwreck in the faith' (1:19-20). This passage, beginning the second chapter, looks outward to the authorities of the wider world. The writer teaches that the church in Ephesus should seek good relationships with those who hold power. There is evidence that the wider Church faced persecution in many places – Roman policy disapproved of new religions, particularly when they claimed that anyone other than Caesar was lord. The Church has learnt, perhaps through painful experience, that if it is to flourish they need to be on good terms with authority, as far as possible. Therefore, the Ephesian Christians should pray for those in power as a demonstration of their good intentions in wider society. Perhaps this is a slightly different emphasis from Paul's exhortation to pray for rulers because they were appointed by God (Romans 13:1).

The strong affirmation that praying for rulers is appropriate (v.3) may suggest that this approach is controversial. The writer justifies it by arguing that it is consistent with God's will because it creates channels through which all people may be saved, ransomed by Christ (cf Matthew 20:28). The hymn-like affirmation of the one, unique God, mediated only through Jesus, highlights the absolute Christian rejection of the many faiths of the Roman Empire. This is more surprising than it might seem. In that context, it was common to worship in more than one faith community, almost as an insurance policy against

choosing the wrong god. Christian claims to exclusivity came as a surprise to many Gentiles. The passage ends by reiterating Paul's assertion that he is genuinely appointed as apostle to the Gentiles, which was sometimes controversial because of his history as a persecutor (2 Corinthians 12:11-12).

Praying for Gentile authorities, then, is justified for two reasons. From a pastoral perspective, it strengthens the possibility that fledgling, vulnerable Christian communities will be able to worship peaceably. From an evangelistic perspective, rulers are representatives of the wider Gentile community. Christians are called by God to share, with all, the good news that in Christ we can be set free.

Prayer

Lord, you search us and know us.
When we need to pray for people in power,
remind us to see them as people you love.
When we think about how to spend our money,
help us to see the impact of our decisions.
When you want us to pray for all people,
inspire us to see the needs beyond our own community.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Heavenly Father,
you encourage us to come to you in prayer.
Thank you for knowing and hearing
the desires of our hearts.
Remind us, O Lord, to pray continually
for the real world in which we live,
our families, friends and ourselves.

Amen.