

1Tim 23-10-15b

We're ready now to resume our study in 1 Timothy, the second chapter. Therefore, I exhort first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. Now, we've talked about what supplications and prayers are.

This is the bringing of requests before God's throne. What kind of requests? We have to consider these requests and ask ourselves in the light of God's word and the revelation of his purpose and his truth, what is it that we can request and expect an affirmative response? What kind of requests can we make? Well, first of all, knowing the target of these requests, they are to be made for all men, kings and all who are in authority. Okay, so kings and those who are in authority, not just in Ephesus, not just in the Holy land, not just in Rome, but that prayers and requests, these intercessions and supplications be made specifically targeted at policies and governance and the exercise of governmental power.

So we can pray for world peace, we can pray for evangelization of everybody in the world and so on, and that's almost a separate subject. Here, Paul, in the light of chapter one and still saying, therefore, on the basis of that charge, the goal of which is faith and a good conscience, he urges, first of all, that prayer and supplication be made. First of all, this puts us in the position of coming before God and entering into his presence, which requires humility.

God's gonna resist the proud, he's gonna give grace to the humble. That's recorded three different places in scripture. It's important.

And as we come, we have to, first of all, be qualified to enter into the divine presence. Anyone who has been invited to the White House or to see the Queen or whoever else, takes a moment to think about how they're dressed, how they're coiffed, what sort of adornments or jewelry they are or are not going to wear. You anticipate a visit, you anticipate coming into the presence of someone considered important, certainly.

How much more so should we consider ourselves and ensure that we are washed and clean, that we're not trying to drag a sinful heart and a contaminated conscience into the throne room of God, that we have, first of all, acknowledged our sins and our need for cleansing and forgiveness so that when we begin the request phase, we will find grace in God's sight. You think about Queen Esther going before Ahasuerus, uninvited, to make a request on behalf of her people. She is making an appeal to a king about a policy that was potentially going to exterminate the people of God.

It was an extermination policy. And there is fruitful reflection and meditation to be had in going back to the days of Esther and noting what was said and done at that time when there was a dire threat against God's people who were, by the way, in captivity for lack of spiritual progress, lack of appreciation for the God of their fathers. That's why they are

captive to the Persians in that day.

And yet there is appeal made for their preservation. There is appeal made that they not be exterminated. And there is courage required on the part of Esther who has come to the kingdom for such a time as this, as Mordecai reminds her.

So, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. This is not all men in terms of the entirety of the population of the planet. This is, by its construction, all kinds of men.

This is Jews and Gentiles. This is people in any involved nation, country, area, region, city, rural area. All men is modified by what follows, kings and all who are in authority.

So we're looking at all men in terms of groups, in terms of locations, in terms of their governance, and their division into groups and nations by separate governance, by geography, and so on. So to put this into current terms, there are people who would say, well, I side with one party in this conflict. For months and months, it has been Russia and Ukraine, and people take sides.

In the last week and a half, it has been Israel and a terrorist group, Hamas, located in the midst of and infiltrated and mixed in very thoroughly with the Palestinian population. And it is not homogenous. They are not all of one mind.

As is the case in most nations, there are divisions, there are parties, there are factions, there are opposing viewpoints on all kinds of things. So when it says to pray for kings and those who are in authority, well, how did they get to be the king? Was it democratic? Was it autocratic? Was it by coup or military force? Was it by assassinating the previous guy or guys? What kind of government is it? That's why it says kings and all those who are in authority. Not everybody is governed by a king.

There are other forms of government. But to pray for these groups under the umbrella of all men, where is the point of contact for these prayers? Where is the nexus where prayer can be effective? It's really very scattershot and somewhat lazy to say, well, I pray for everybody in the region. Well, pray what? Every individual situation is different.

Do you wanna try to break that down into very small groups? And I'm gonna pray for these hostages and these people who have been left homeless. I'm gonna pray for these that have been bereaved. I'm gonna pray for these that have children, these that have old people, these that are in the hospitals, these are trying to work in the hospitals.

I'm gonna try to pray for these than that. Paul says, if you want to pray an effective prayer in the light of chapter one, faith and a good conscience, right away, we have to sort out what it is we have established as the goal of our prayer. I will say with some confidence that most people today who are praying about the situation in the Middle East are praying for a cessation of violence and hostility, a cessation of bloodshed, a

ceasefire of some kind, some accommodation or reconciliation, some means by which these horrific circumstances can be taken no further, ameliorated, remediated, reduced in their intensity and so on.

That isn't what Paul is talking about. And you say, well, but how can that be wrong? It can't be wrong if it feels so right. Go back to the end of chapter one, preceding the therefore, as we move into this topic of prayer for all people.

What is its goal? It is the word of God. It is the salvation in Jesus Christ. It is faith and a conscience that is influenced and defined by divine values.

And it is not always God's will that there be peace. God has sent his own people into conflict. God has sent his own people in to invade a land.

And this is so horrifying to some people that they wanna throw the Old Testament out of the Bible and say, well, Joshua didn't really know God or he wouldn't have done that. Moses didn't really understand God or he wouldn't have written what he wrote. Israel wouldn't have had an army and wouldn't have gone in and invaded.

The God I know, the God I see in Jesus would have never told the Israelites to go in and wipe out the Canaanites to the last individual. Women, children, animals, God would never say that. So I will tell God what he should and should not say and who he is or is not and what he did or did not have his people do.

I'll be the arbiter of that. I don't need to point out how dangerous that kind of thinking is because if you do it on history and if you do it in world politics, you'll do it in your own life, in your own heart and in your own circumstance. And you will be the personal arbiter of what is right and what is wrong, what should and should not be said.

And you're no different than an unbeliever. What is the value of your faith? What is the value of the word of God? Where is your faith? Where is your good conscience? If you're gonna decide what is and isn't moral rectitude, we don't always know God's purpose in allowing what he allows. Jesus said at the baptism from John, which inaugurates Jesus' ministry, which begins with preaching and ends with persecution, which begins with the declaration of life and hope and a coming kingdom and ends with tragedy and rejection and the destruction of the nation of Israel.

And Jesus tells John, when John says, I don't wanna baptize your humanity into this mission, Jesus says, suffer it to be so now, for it is necessary that we fulfill all righteousness. If John doesn't baptize Jesus into his earthly ministry, he doesn't arrive at the cross. And the cross is tragic by anyone's reckoning.

Anybody you talk to, nobody looks at the cross and says, well, that's a wonderful expression of the goodness of humanity and the greatness of... It's tragic. It's horrific. It is brutal.

It is torture. It is blind. It is arrogant.

It is perpetrated by self-righteous religious people who believe they're doing it in the name of God, who think that they're removing a blasphemer and someone who is misleading and misguiding the people when in fact, he is the son of God and the source of resurrection life and a future and relationship with God. He is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament promises that these men have memorized and have taught and have embraced. And yet the fulfillment is standing in front of them and they can't see it because they've got a better idea than God.

They know what the Messiah should look like and he doesn't look like this Yeshua from Nazareth. This is not the guy. This is not God.

And ultimately they decide we're gonna have to kill him. And you have the equivalent of that in the Christian world today. So we have to be careful.

We have to be humble and we have to carefully follow God's guidance if we are going to navigate circumstances, if we're gonna understand world events and our place in God's unfolding of that plan and purpose. So I exhort supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all groups of which we are aware. This means don't only pray for the Jews, don't only pray for the Christians, don't only pray for certain individuals that I know, all men.

We take a comprehensive view because any particular individual that you might want to pray for is within a group and is in a country or a nation under a government that is influenced by other governments. And the rifle bullet prayer doesn't take one BB for this person and one BB for this group and one BB for this situation. And here are the hostages and here are the bereaved and here are the injured and here are the ones homeless and here are the ones here and there and elsewhere.

Here are the ones serving in the military. Your scattershot approach obscures the strategic purpose, the overarching movement that Paul is talking about here. Paul is looking at the gospel to the Gentiles.

Timothy is not in Jerusalem. Timothy is in Ephesus. His congregation is largely Gentile.

Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. And his concern therefore is for all of those involved I'm not gonna take time to do it, but you can trace every time Paul says the gospel that was entrusted to me, the mystery that was real to me, this is what is happening by my gospel. And he takes unique ownership of the mystery, the revelation of God, that God's plan would expand to include the Gentiles and would expand to establish and build the church, the body of Christ, and that his plans and purposes for Israel would be temporarily set aside.

That information wasn't given to Peter, wasn't given to John, wasn't given to Philip or

Andrew or Bartolomeo or James the Less or any of the other disciples. This is why Paul personalizes it and once you start looking at the passages, there are a lot of them. If I had time, I would take us to them.

But Paul says, it was entrusted to me. I am an apostle of Jesus Christ, he says in this letter by the commandment of God, our savior and the Lord Jesus Christ. But the mystery that God would break off the plan for Israel and stop the forward progress of the fulfillment of those prophecies and the establishing of that kingdom to do something new is unique to the apostle Paul.

And this is why you so often see him say, according to my gospel, the truth that was entrusted to me, the stewardship of the mysteries that was granted to me. He doesn't say to us, he doesn't say to me and the other apostles, he says to me. You can find a place in Acts where he says, Peter has the gospel to the circumcision and I have been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcision.

Are there two gospels? Very interesting question. Why isn't it the same gospel that is taken to the circumcision and the uncircumcision? Paul says, Peter's got a gospel that goes to the Jews. That's the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached, that John the Baptist preached, that the disciples were entrusted with in Acts 1.8. You will be witnessed to me, you 11, Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria till the end of the age.

Paul is sent to the Gentiles. He must bear my name before kings and so on. Doesn't mean that the disciples of the Lord Jesus never preached to Gentiles, nor does it mean that Paul never preached to the Jews.

But the commission, the emphasis in the same way that you can't say Jesus never helped a Gentile in his earthly ministry. You've got the Syrophoenician woman, you've got the Roman centurion. There are exceptions, but what did Jesus say? I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

He tells his disciples, go not in the way of the Gentiles. And you think, really? Why, if Jesus is here and it's the gospel of the good news of salvation, why doesn't he tell his disciples, tell it to anybody that will listen? He said, don't spend time with the Gentiles. Don't go in the way of the Gentiles.

Lost sheep of the house of Israel, it's specific. And it's very interesting to think about that because people are quick to assume, well, all means all. God so loved the world, so all the world is gonna be saved, and so on.

We have to be sensitive and we have to be careful to not assume that we know what God is saying or that we assume we know what God is doing. Humility says, I will seek, I will ask, I will knock, and I will be ready to accept the answer even if it does not meet my personal expectations. Because it is God's personal expectations that count, not mine.

And we sometimes have to submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God if he is ever going to exalt us in due time. Remember the parable of the minas and the servant thought his master was a hard man and he had a better idea for what to do with what was entrusted to him. The parable of the talents, same idea.

There was one servant that thought he had a wiser view. He judged the master instead of undertaking the opportunity. It's a mistake.

So supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks. Stop and think about this. Who are the authorities in the Palestinian territories? You've got President Mahmoud Abbas up in the West Bank.

You've got Hamas, the terrorists in Gaza. What does the scripture say? Pray for all men, no exclusions, no exceptions. Pray for all men except those really evil terroristic groups.

Doesn't say it, does it? This is scripture. And if we are going to be balanced, we will spend every bit as much time praying for the authorities and the leadership in Hamas as we do for the authorities and the leadership in Israel. And the United States, and Iran, and Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, and every other group that falls.

If you can find an exception to all men, then you don't have to pray for them. But if they fall under this rubric, all men, if they have a government and an authority established by whatever means, pray for kings and all who are in authority. All who are in authority, all who have taken the reins, all who are perpetrating strategy and policy.

What kind of prayer? Oh Lord, rain down fire and brimstone and get those rascals off the face of the earth. Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks. All right, let's just break this down.

I am going to take this literally because I'm a literal interpreting kind of guy. I am going to give thanks for those who are in authority in Gaza. I am going to give thanks for Hamas.

My favorite question, as most of you know, is how? I have guidance from the word of God that I am to give thanks for authorities everywhere they appear, everywhere they occur, everywhere they exercise that authority. Because guess what? As Paul says in Romans, they have that authority by divine dispensation. They do not bear the sword in vain.

So when I say, but they are heinous, terroristic, utterly immoral, demonically, they just seem to be demonic in their destructive, hateful, bitter, utterly unconscionable behavior. And yet this says, give thanks. So how do we do this? Why would I be thankful that there are terrorists attacking the state of Israel? Anytime there is suffering, anytime there is hardship, anytime there is something that destabilizes, what does this do? People begin to think about what is most important.

They think about life and death. They think about life and is there an afterlife? They think about whether or not there is a God, whether or not there is a future, whether or not there is a kind of sin and a kind of evil that needs to be remediated. And if everything is peace and everything is prosperity, and there's a chicken in every pot and a roof over every head, and there is no oppression and there is no instability, where is that sense of need? There are times and there are places where the need for righteousness to prevail, the need and the recognition that there is an all powerful righteous God who needs to render judgment, who needs to deliver those who qualify for deliverance.

This kind of circumstance focuses everyone's attention on the most important things. Often it is a terrible way to focus it. Why didn't Jesus put on a splendiferous robe and ascend glowing marble steps to a golden altar and gracefully lay himself down and close his eyes and fall asleep to give his life as an atonement for sin? It's the exact opposite, isn't it? He was willing to undergo the shame and the humiliation, the spitting and the tearing out of his beard, the gross scorn and abuse as a part of securing our salvation.

Why is that even a component? Why did God allow that to happen? No wonder the Lord Jesus said, "Let this cup pass from me, if it be your will." It's horrific, and yet it is God's will because it is necessary to focus attention on both the problem and its solution. I wanna draw your attention to Jeremiah chapter two, verse 13. They, Israel, the people of God in Jeremiah's day.

Remember, Jeremiah is the weeping prophet. He is the last prophet in Judah before and then during the incursion of the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar comes in and destroys Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day, Jeremiah and lamentations.

That is his time period. We saw this in our Kings and Prophets study. What does Jeremiah say in chapter two, verse 13? "They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, "and have dug their own cisterns." Cisterns that cannot hold water, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

"They have forsaken me, the spring of living waters, "and have dug their own cisterns." Broken cisterns that cannot hold water. It is easy and sort of a reflex, but it is simplistic and shallow to conflate the Israelis who live in the historic land of Israel and have their capital in Jerusalem with the biblical people of God. Why is that a mistake? And not to say that we don't watch Israel and we don't focus on what God is doing in that region, but it is a mistake to conflate those people with the people of promise, the people that Moses led out of Egypt and into the promised land, the people that God dealt with through his prophets and kings in the Old Testament day.

Why? Israel is a secular state. To the extent that religion is practiced there, it is Judaism, which does not save, that rejects the Lord Jesus Christ just as thoroughly as Islam. If you reject the Lord Jesus Christ, what have you done? They have forsaken me the spring of living water.

Jesus said, I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly. But if you reject the spring of living water, you instead dig your own cistern and it is a broken cistern that cannot hold water. How do you find out that your cistern is inadequate, insufficient, and leads to death instead of life? It takes a shock to the system.

When will Israel once again be the people who have 12,000 servants of God from every tribe? It is in the tribulation. It is in the day of trouble. It takes the day of trouble.

These people didn't convert before the rapture. They didn't convert before the 70th week started. They didn't convert before the appearance of the beast and the false prophet.

When do they place their faith in God? When are they sealed in their foreheads as servants of God? It is in the time of Jacob's trouble, a day unlike any that has ever been seen before and will never be seen again. That's what it takes. So are you going to go to Psalm 122 and go to the last verse and say, pray for the peace of Jerusalem? This is like praying that the arresting party will not find Jesus in Gethsemane.

Pray that the Romans will lose him in the warrens and subterranean chambers of the palace and he'll escape and flee and he won't go to the cross. There are horrific things. This is like praying if you could go back in the past and you're in Israel and you pray, oh Lord, don't let Joshua find the women and the children and the animals.

Don't let Joshua slay those Canaanite lives. All lives matter. All lives are precious.

Oh Lord, it can't be you telling Joshua to go in and slay the Canaanites. I am here to tell you on the authority of the word of God that there is a time when God mandates loss of life. People didn't leave the bathtub running to create Noah's flood.

That was God. People didn't throw a cigarette butt out and set the side of the road on fire and that's how Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. People didn't follow unsafe building practices and then get careless and knock the walls of Jericho down on their own.

God did these things. God sent Israel in to take lives. David can say, blessed be the Lord who teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight.

There is a time when it is a part of God's purpose for there to be bloodshed and violence, sometimes against his own people. Read the accounts of what happened when Rome invaded Israel in 70 AD. Look at Masada.

Look at what happened earlier in the Babylonian destruction. Look at what happened in Northern Kingdom with the Assyrians who were the rod of God's anger and the staff of his indignation. God sent the Assyrians in to brutally destroy his people.

The Babylonians brutally destroyed the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. It's not pretty, but we tend to magnify human life, human peace versus human suffering as the highest priority and it's not. It's not.

What is the highest priority? It's here in our passage. Look back at 1 Timothy 2. Why do we pray for these kings? Why do we pray and even give thanks that there are authorities in the Palestinian areas, that there are authorities in Iran, that there are authorities in Africa who are countenancing, if not sponsoring, the slaughter of Christians in their countries, sponsoring starvation to aggrandize themselves, that there are authorities in China, that there are authorities in other communist, Islamic and oppressive socialist regimes in the past and in the present, why? Give thanks for these authorities, make supplications, prayers and intercessions, why? In order that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. In order that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.

So are we saying, oh Lord, let this dog fight, may all the dogs kill each other and lie bleeding in the street so long as we live a quiet and peaceable life? Remember the example earlier that Timothy's commission, his calling, the prophecies related to him are emblematic and applicable for all of us, that we are to be similarly guided. We have a similar obligation to understand our call and our purpose in God's plan and to pursue it. Even as Paul tells Timothy, the same is true here.

We are praying, not that in the immediate circumstance, I don't want bullets flying outside my window. I don't want my kids in danger at school. I don't want there to be terrorists lurking around blowing stuff up here in the United States as is quite possible.

What does it mean to live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence? The peace that passes understanding is not based on circumstance. How can you pray that we have a quiet and peaceable life when Jesus said, in this world, you will have tribulation? Paul says, a good soldier is going to endure suffering. Read 2 Timothy 2 again.

We looked at it a couple of weeks ago. A good soldier is going to endure hardship. And it's the word there is kakopatheos.

When you hear people talking about something bad and you have that K-A-K-O or something similar to it, kako is bad, kakos is bad. And patheos is feeling, pathos, something that is pathetic. Sympathy is a different prefix on that same word.

Sympatheo, to feel with, to experience with. Well, kakopatheos is enduring hardship. It's feeling bad.

And God doesn't take it away. We don't pray it off and pray it out. We don't live a quiet and peaceable life because we are not enduring hardship.

But as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, and as one who recognizes the realities in the world, there will be no peace until the world has the King of Peace. In the meantime, there are going to be wars, rumors of wars, famines, disasters of every shape, size, and description. We saw this in Matthew 24.

So the question is, how do we pray in view of these facts? We pray that God will work His will among these governments, in these places, and with these people. That is the focus of our prayer. It is the big movements.

And we pray as we look at these, and it is our prayer and our understanding that these things are in God's hands and that it is God's power by which these individuals and groups rule. It is God's allowing or prohibiting, remember when Sennacherib was coming down to invade Jerusalem and there was repentance on the part of Hezekiah and the people in that area, and God turned him away. And he doesn't come in.

He doesn't sack the city. That's gonna happen later. God controls these things.

The King will hear a rumor. They will be fooled. They will think that there are hordes and they will flee and disarray.

God brings that about. What is the point of this whole passage? God's got all of the pieces in His very capable hands. When we look at world events, we look at the situation as it impinges on us and as it affects the world at large, and we take it to God in prayer, and we're thankful that God has brought the world to this point, that He has allowed what He has allowed, and He has stopped what He has stopped.

We recognize His purpose. And in that prayer, in that recognition, in that objective evaluation, that these things must be so. The disciples wanted to reject Jesus, telling Him that He would be delivered into the hands of men and suffer and die and rise the third day.

Oh, Lord, let it not be so. Get thee behind me, Satan. Recognizing God's hand and God's purpose in allowing what He allows, even when it involves horrific violence and bloodshed, that recognition, that understanding, that objectivity brings quiet and peace, godliness and reverence, appreciation that God knows what He's doing.

God knew what He was doing in the Old Testament, sending Joshua into the land. God knows what He's doing now. And perhaps this is what it takes to bring individuals in that region to a recognition that this is beyond the human power, beyond human ability to solve, that if there is a God, I need to find Him and turn to Him and avail myself of His grace, salvation through His Son, regardless of their current persuasion.

Can Palestinians come to faith in Christ? They can, and they have. So we pray. How do we pray for kings and all those that have authority? What did Jesus pray in the garden as authorities were about to come and arrest and try and convict and crucify Him? Not my

will, but thine be done.

Recognizing that God is in control, His purposes work together for good. Sometimes these things are necessary in ways that we can't even comprehend or understand, but I do not place confidence in my own understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him. In all circumstances, in all unfolding events, acknowledge Him.

He will direct your path. Peace, quiet, godliness, reverence, come to us in the act of acknowledging God, taking our concerns to Him, laying them at the foot of the throne and leaving them there. We don't pray for peace per se.

Let me close really quickly. I'm a little over time here, but there's a lot going on in the world. If you have a chance, turn to Psalm 122.

Psalm 122. This is where the exhortation to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is found. But look at the context.

I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem. What kind of Jerusalem? A Jerusalem that says, let's go to the house of the Lord.

Let's worship. Let's enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Let's be thankful to Him and bless His name.

I'm quoting Psalm 100. That's the kind of Jerusalem described here. I was glad when they, in Jerusalem, said to me, let's go to the house of the Lord.

Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem, as this is being said. Jerusalem is built up as a city united together where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as a testimony for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. There the thrones of judgment stand, the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May those who love you prosper. Pray for what Jerusalem? What kind of Jerusalem? What kind of people dwelling in Jerusalem? Is that what exists right now? Can you, with shallow thought and little consideration, abstractly pray for the peace of the current Jerusalem? That's not what this Psalm is talking about.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, where the tribes go up as a testimony for Israel to give thanks to the name of the Lord. That's where the thrones of the sons of David stand. This is praying for the future Jerusalem, where the Lord Jesus Himself and the sons of David will rule and render judgment.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, verse six. May those who love you prosper. May there be peace within your walls and prosperity inside your fortresses.

There is no such thing as at the present time. You can love the Jerusalem that God has promised. You can look forward to it.

And you can pray for those who will qualify themselves to dwell in it and enter into it. May there be peace within your walls, prosperity inside your fortresses. For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, peace be within you.

My brothers and friends. This is a Davidic Psalm. Who are David's brothers and David's friends? This is Israel.

And this is godly Israel. This is sanctified Israel. This is the Israel of God.

I will say, peace be within you. For the sake of the house of the Lord, our God, I will seek your prosperity. For the sake of what, in verse nine? The house of the Lord.

Where is the house of the Lord right now? It is not in Jerusalem. There is a temple of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, but you cannot pray for the peace of the current Jerusalem on the strength of this Psalm. This is talking about the Jerusalem that says, let us go to the house of the Lord.

There is no house of the Lord to go to. And there won't be. And until there is, after we leave, we pray for everyone.

We don't just pray for one side. We pray that God's will will unfold and be accomplished in every place, amongst every group. Those who, you can go to the end of Revelation.

Let him who is unclean be unclean still. Let him who is sanctified be sanctified still. God will work his will in and among these groups.

And we pray for the leadership of all of them, that God's will will be done. That whatever happens in terms of violence or retribution or heartache or bereavement, that God will work it together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Let me ask you this final question.

If a group of people got together and prayed for peace in the Middle East, and it happened, everybody went home, the dead are buried, the walls are rebuilt, everyone has a place to live, there's a chicken in every pot, there is peace and prosperity, and none of those people have come to Christ, and they live to old age and pass away and are carried to the cemetery, what has been accomplished? Well, they lived a peaceable and happy circumstantial life, a life without Christ, no eternal life, no resurrection to future inhabiting of glory, no opportunities to rule and reign with Christ, no opportunities to enter into all of the future potentials, being buried into a Christless grave, as Dr. Crystal would say. Well, but they had peace. What's the point of peace if you die without Christ? What's the point of peace if you live without Christ, if you can't redeem the time and your days are wasted and they are ephemeral? This is Solomon and Ecclesiastes, it's

vapor and a chasing after the wind.

What does it ultimately mean without Christ? God's will is that all men everywhere come to repentance, that all men everywhere be saved. That's what we saw in 2 Timothy 2. You might do well to review that in thinking about this chapter. Our prayers are focused toward spiritual realities, eternal realities, not the mere handling of circumstances, however dire they may be.

Well, much to think about there. We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the light that it shines on our path in dark days, dark times, with darkness seeming to prevail in so many ways, violent and hateful behaviors and seemingly no solution. We know that you work all things together for good for those who love you and are called according to your purpose. And we pray individually and collectively that you will accomplish your purpose in these circumstances.

And as we think about them, and as we navigate our own lives and our own challenges, that we will likewise be found in the very center of your will so that your light will shine and the goal for which you have left us in this life will be accomplished. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.