

What Can You Do About This Mess?

by Tim Jennings

You can feel the earth quake with political unrest. Malicious words and outlandish lies are the dialect of our day. Societies are boiling over with anger and violence. Immorality is accepted and even celebrated. There is a constant fear of the latest virus or natural disaster that threatens to change the landscape. The constant news cycle, like a drug dealer, injects the latest form of distress into the ears of a society of anxiety addicts.

What can a disciple of Jesus do about this mess? Should we be consumed with despair? Should we retreat to islands of isolation? Should we fume and fight? No. We should not be surprised. The Bible constantly compares the nations to a raging sea, foaming and cresting with turbulence. The turmoil of our day is not unique, but our response should be.

The Bible does not call us to take up arms and raise our fists, but our Commander orders us to drop to our knees and raise up holy hands in prayer.

Please don't be disheartened by the simplicity of this response. Prayer is no cop-out. It is not the passive reply of the timid. Prayer is the courageous act of heaven's soldiers (Eph. 6:18). It is "of first importance" (1 Tim. 2:1). It raises our heads out of the mire to see that God is still actively on the throne (Isa. 6; Rev. 5). Nothing is hopeless. The shouts of angry and wicked people will not have the last word. So yes, the world is a mess, but you can pray.

1 Timothy 2:1-8 provides us with a model of how to pray in a messed up world.

Prayer Reminds Us God Is In Control

First, our prayers must push beyond our national borders or political ideas and reach out for the spiritual good of all people. Paul writes, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people;" because God "desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1,4). Our prayers should be as big as God's desire to save.

This includes even praying for "kings and all those in authority" (1 Tim. 2:2). No matter how distant they are or how sinful they live, we can touch their lives through prayer.

The reason prayer is effective over such vast lands and powerful people is because God is in control! Paul begins his letter to Timothy praying to a God who is "the eternal King," and he ends his letter praying to "the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 1:17, 6:15-16). Prayer is our declaration that God reigns. "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will" (Prov. 21:1).

Daniel was distressed over the condition and survival of God's people, so he turned to prayer. I'm sure the prayer of an old man seemed like nothing compared to the horse and chariot, spear and arrow. Except the God of heaven heard it, and that very day dispatched angels to turn the hearts of world leaders to save His people (Dan. 9-11; esp. 10:12-20). Daniel knew that God "changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings" (Dan. 2:21).

A fearful and complaining spirit characterizes those whose eyes are turned downward, but a hopeful courage is the possession of those who pray.

Pray To Live A Godly Life

The purpose our prayers is that we might live in peace, as Paul put it, "pray...that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:2).

God created government for the peace and security of society. When it functions correctly disciples can fulfill their responsibilities without interference. That is why we pray for peace, not for our personal comfort or national pride, but that the cause of Christ might flourish (Acts 9:31).

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