

Pray For Our Leaders (NDP)

Written for the Door County Advocate—May 5th 2007

I am writing this on the first Thursday in May 2007, the National Day of Prayer. I am thinking of something that the Apostle Paul wrote: *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior...* (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

Paul wrote those words during the reign of the Roman emperor, Nero. Nero may have been an effective emperor, advancing the Roman economy and strengthening the empire's power and influence. But he was also notoriously wicked and depraved. He was a murderous man, executing his mother and many opponents and enemies. He hated Christians and targeted them specifically for persecution. In all likelihood, Nero gave the personal order to behead Paul.

And Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says to pray for those in high positions, like the emperor. Paul did not agree with Nero and the emperor's policies. But he knew that the emperor was not the enemy; the enemy is Satan, the devil, the one who (Jesus taught in John 8) *"was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* The main work for a Christian is not to oppose those who are opposed to God's truth; the main work for a Christian is to pray for them, and to do good to them, and to love them.

As I'm writing on the National Day of Prayer, this also comes to mind, words from God for his people, delivered through his servant, the prophet Jeremiah. In chapter 29 of that Old Testament book, we read: *"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters...But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."* (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

The people of Israel and Judah would rather have been back in their own land, but that was not God's plan for them. God's plan was to discipline his people by having them live in exile, under a king who did not care for God in a country where the Jewish way of life was not the norm. God's direction to his people was to pray for that foreign land (and the leaders of that land), and to seek the welfare of the city that had become their home.

Most of us have our personal political inclinations. We have our opinions and convictions. People seek political processes and maneuvering to get their way and to have an influence. But I wonder how much better "everything" might be if we prayed more and protested less, if we argued less and prayed more for our leaders and for each other (and especially for those with whom we disagree).

God told his people to pray for the king and the country that took them into captivity.

Paul prayed for the man who would have his head.

The call for those who follow the Lord is to pray for our land and our leaders.

And not just on the National Day of Prayer, but today and tomorrow and every day.

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Bible verses are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).