

# IN JESUS NAME AMEN

## FOR THE SAKE OF OUR COUNTRY

When Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, the Emperor Nero was ruling the Roman Empire with an iron fist. Nero absolutely hated Christians and persecuted them with a vengeance. Because of Nero, countless Christians died extremely brutal deaths. Yet, it's in this historical context that Paul told Timothy to pray "for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity" (1 Timothy 2:2, NLT). By telling Timothy to pray for those in authority, Paul was, in essence, echoing Christ's command to "love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44, NLT). If anyone had an excuse to not pray for their leader, it was the Christians living under Nero; yet Paul made it clear that they should intercede for those in authority, regardless of whether they are unjust or benevolent.

Thankfully, we as Americans have never experienced the tyranny of a leader quite like Nero. But unfortunately, many of us are far more prone to point accusing fingers of blame at our leaders than we are to pray for them. As disciples of Jesus, we must guard ourselves from this kind of behavior and instead lift up our nation and leaders in prayer before the Lord. We must pray for them for the sake of our country, which is at a critical crossroads. We have laws legalizing abortion; society is deeply infected with the disease of materialism; and many worship celebrities instead of God. Our country desperately needs to wake up and return to the Lord.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT), God made a promise to the nation of Israel that we can take for ourselves: "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land." As God's people, we must seek His face and pray for the hearts of Americans to turn towards Him, and we must pray that our leaders will make godly decisions as they direct our country. We should also pray *for* our leaders, because deep down, they need Jesus just like you and me. When a leader makes poor, even sinful, decisions, we can certainly disagree with them, but we should never forget that God loves them.

Paul probably knew this better than anyone. Just like Nero, he used to persecute and murder Christians. Still, God loved and rescued Paul. Because of this, Paul understood that since God loved him while he was still a sinner, God could also love Nero. When

you pray for your leaders, remember that you're praying for people whom God desires relationship with. God cares for them deeply and wants "everyone to be saved and to understand the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4, NLT).

As Americans, it's time to pray. It's time to pray that our nation would return to the Lord. It's time to pray that our leaders would make wise decisions. We must also pray for our leaders who are already believers and for their families. They need our support as they follow God's leading in a time when it's especially unpopular to do so. Equally as important, it's time to pray that those in authority who don't already know God's love would come to experience it in their own lives. When this happens, our leaders will make wise decisions because they'll be plugged into the very source of wisdom!

Let us pray, more fervently than we have ever prayed, for a historic outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us His Church ... a cascading waterfall of God's suffering and abiding love, that will lead us to act with bravery, to walk with integrity, and to stand in unity for the renewal of our culture and the restoration of our nation, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

~ James Robison & Jay Richards

### ***Prayer***

Lord, our nation needs You right now. I pray that we would not turn away from You, but fully return to You. I lift up our local and national leaders as well. I pray that they would come to know You personally and let You guide them as they make decisions. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### ***Activation***

- Make a list of government officials who are in authority over you, from local officials all the way up to the president. Spend time focusing on each name and praying over them.
- Pray for the hearts of America's citizens. Pray that we would return to the Lord and elect officials who will make godly decisions.

### ***For Further Study***

2 Chronicles 7:14–15

Matthew 5:43–48

1 Timothy 2:2–4

### ***Memory Verse***

I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity.

**1 Timothy 2:1–2 (NLT)**