

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Praying For Peace

by Dan Trygg

“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” 1 Timothy 1:5

“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. <sup>3</sup> This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 Timothy 2:1-4

**The events of this past week have been horrendous, and heartbreaking.** Two young black men needlessly killed by policemen, one in Louisiana, and one right here in suburban Saint Paul, ...their final moments captured and broadcast around the world via the internet, ...and then five police officers shot down, and seven others wounded, in the streets of Dallas by a sniper intent on killing as many “men in blue” as he could. **The nation is torn up in anger, rage, grief, sorrow and shock. The repercussions could be disastrous.** Many people are already living in fear, and these kinds of events fan such smoldering emotions into full flame. Some are afraid to leave their homes, or are taking steps to stockpile food, necessities and weapons, to be able to endure an extended time of civil unrest, or worse. Others are arming themselves, so they will not be defenseless if caught in a dangerous position. Some are enraged, engaging in protests, and posting provocative material on the internet which nearly provokes people to violence. Others are righteously indignant, standing up for truth and justice. Still others, blinded by hate, are demonizing “the other side” by reinforcing old stereotypes, ...or embracing old stereotypic symbols that incite outrage. Their actions are like throwing gas on a fire, and violence seems ready to explode as tensions mount. **Our country is in a very precarious place, right now.** We are not even half way through this summer, and, unless some “cooler heads” can talk people down, this next couple of months could be brutal.

**In addition, we are in the midst of a political campaign, where both sides are ready and willing to exploit these events for political capital.** Neither side seems to be genuinely concerned about talking common sense, or brokering peace, much less God’s standards of justice and righteousness. They are promoting *their* agendas. They are playing to their supporters. Who knows what they would really do if they were to be elected? **Things have been said or done by both sides that would not pass the “sniff test” before God. They are potentially dangerous precursors of oppression, both political and religious.**

**If this were not bad enough, we have the unknown potential of the financial changes that could precipitate from the collapse of the European Union, if that continues to unravel.** You hear so-called “experts” on both sides. Some say that this will pull our economy back into a downturn. Others say it will have hardly any impact on us, at all. Only God *really* knows.

**Then there is the weather.** The reality of how fragile our prosperity is becomes apparent with a few weeks without enough rain, ...or with *too much* rain, ...or with dramatic temperature change. **If God wanted to bring us to our knees, it would not take long.** In Israel, at the time of Elijah, it did not rain for 3 years and 6 months (Jas. 5:17)! In spite of our technology, and our understanding of nature, we still are dependent upon some normalcy in our weather patterns. Wildfires, hurricanes, floods, lightning strikes and hail have caused considerable damage in recent months.

**With all of these uncertainties, and a multitude of other sources of chaos, what is a person to do?** Paul lays out some key truths for us here in 1 Timothy. He was writing from his imprisonment in Rome. He was on the sidelines, out of the action for the time being. From his vantage point, he was very aware of the spiritual chaos in the world around him. He reminded Timothy that he had warned him to **instruct people not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to controversies or speculative teachings, which distract people from the main thing: agapē-love, emanating from a renewed and pure heart, a good conscience and an unhypocritical faith (1:3-5). He called that the “goal of our instruction”.** The word translated as “instruction” is not the normal word for “teaching”. It is that word we talked about last week, from 1 Thessalonians 4:2, the “message-alongside”, or the “charge” given to those in relationship with Jesus. **The end-point of Paul’s “charge” or expectation for them, was agapē-love.**

**This agapē-love can be blocked or diverted by unproductive thoughts and discussion.** Chaotic and fear-based thinking can occupy the mind and fill the heart with anxiety, anger, divisiveness, and other emotions produced by the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). **These are incompatible with the undistracted devotion and singleness of heart that enables the outflow of the Holy Spirit.** *It is the fruit of the inworking Holy Spirit that produces the agapē-love Paul was looking for.* A “pure heart” is a heart that is *single*, of one substance, unmixed in orientation. It is the Lord who is consistently loving. **For us to experience and express such love, we must learn to unswervingly receive and**

**express His life, ...His mind and heart for others.** Conspiracy theories, speculations, fearful or angry emotions, draw our attention away from Him, and soon the chaos *surrounding us* becomes the chaos *inside of us*.

**The flow of *agapē*-love stops when we break off the flow of the Holy Spirit**, by disobeying what we know to be true or the leading of God. That is why Paul says that *agapē*-love comes from a good conscience and an unhypocritical faith. **If we go against our own conscience, it is like we are disobeying the Holy Spirit** (Rom. 14:22,23), **...and if our lives are hypocritical, the Holy Spirit Himself will be grieved**, even if we do not perceive what we are doing. In either case, *the flow of life is stopped*, and we are left to our own self-driven lives. It does not take long for the fruit to become evident in our attitudes and behaviors.

**People who do not understand these principles get all twisted around in their focus, thinking that the Christian life is about trying to “be good” or to “keep the Law”.** They don’t understand what they are talking about. **The Law was *not* written for righteous people to live by.** It was written to show unrighteous people that they are sinners, **...and need a Savior.** As Paul wrote about in Galatians, if a Law could have been written that would have been *able to impart life* to us, well then righteousness *would* have been through the Law (Gal. 3:21).

**Paul then uses his own life as an example.** Though he had formerly been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent aggressor, God had mercy on him. He said, “I *have grace* in Christ Jesus, the One *empowering* me...” (vs. 12). **“The *grace* that is in Christ was *more than overflowing* with faith and *agapē*-love that is found in Messiah Jesus”** (1:14). Paul himself had learned to abide in the grace that empowered the *agapē*-love in his life.

**Paul then makes an important statement: “Faithful is the word and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, ...of which I am first”** (vs. 15). Paul was meant to be an example of God’s patience and redeeming power. To God be the glory!! It is easy to pass over verse 15, but I believe *it is the key* to perceiving the flow of thought that goes into the next chapter. **This statement is the *objective* around which *all* of life revolves, the salvation of peoples’ lives.** If Jesus came into the world for *this* purpose, should not this also be OUR purpose? *This* is the “good fight” that Paul exhorts Timothy to fight. **How do you “fight the good fight”? By keeping faith and a good conscience, the same foundational ingredients for *agapē*-love** Paul had mentioned in vs. 5! We will fulfill our mission if we learn to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and are filled by His life to overflowing so that we express the *agapē*-love of God to others. Isn’t this also what Jesus said, “They will know you are My disciples if you have *agapē*-love for one another” (Jn. 13:35)? **The *main thing* is to keep the main thing the *main thing*. What is the main thing? To learn to abide in and be filled by God’s Spirit, and walk that out in practical ways, as He directs us.**

**All of this is the set up for 2:1-7. When you understand the *centrality of the mission*, then you can understand why Paul wrote, “*First of all, then...*”** This passage is the *only time* in all of the scriptures where these two Greek words come together in this way. This is the *only time* when Paul, or anyone else, writes, “I encourage you, therefore, first of all things...” **The *first and most important* thing to start doing to carry out the mission is... “to make entreaties, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings on behalf of all people...”** That might seem like a no-brainer, but the sentence does not end there. **...on behalf of kings and all the ones being in a place of authority** (prominence)... Wait, the sentence is still not finished! **...in order that** (a purpose clause) **we might live a quiet and tranquil life in all good-devotedness and respectful-dignity.** What!? We are to *pray* that we might live a quiet and tranquil life? Yes! But *that* is not all, either! **...This is good and pleasing to our Savior-God, who desires all people to be saved and come to a true-knowledge/recognition (epignōsis) of the truth.**

**Once you are being filled and empowered by God yourself, the first and most important thing to be doing is to pray for peace and tranquility, so we can live lives that reveal Jesus to other people clearly, so that they might come to recognize the truth of who Jesus is.**

**So, three main lessons: (1.) The goal of our charge as Christians is to learn to walk in *agapē*-love.** This is a by-product of being filled with the Holy Spirit. In order to abide in the Spirit, we must guard our hearts and our focus. Disruption in the world around us, or speculative thinking or conspiracy theories, or any number of other things are distractions that can keep us from abiding in Christ. *Agapē*-love comes as we maintain a single, un-mixed focus on God as our Life, our Source, our Joy and our Delight. If you do not know Him in those ways, you *can*. He is much more precious than anything else, when you really come to know Him intimately. Going against our conscience, or being fake, will shut off the flow of the Spirit. We then need to return to Him, and become renewed in our walk with God. **(2.) We are a people on a mission, the same mission Jesus was on when He was here. “Christ came into the world to save sinners.”** *This* is what our lives are to be all about. *This* is what God is doing. We can make a difference in the lives of other people. We can help them find something better than what they currently know and pursue. **(3.) The first thing to do is pray.** *Pray for peace and order*, to have the opportunity to live out Jesus before others in ways that will help them see Him. Don’t get caught up in the drama. Keep focused on the goal.