

Praying for Civil Authorities (1 Tim 2:1-7): A Contextual Study

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ABSTRACT: *Most exegetes regard 1Timothy 2:1-7 as a general command for Christians to pray for all people and kings or rulers. This paper will demonstrate how Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus to pray for all people, including kings, in order to fulfill God's mission of bringing salvation to all humanity in the text under consideration. In the same vein, Christians in Nigeria must equally pray for themselves and civil leaders in order to exercise their mission in a country riddled with ills that dehumanize the image of God in the human person. To elaborate on the meaning of this passage, the grammatical structure of the text will be examined. This article argues that if 1Tim. 2:1-7 is read and understood, Christians in Nigeria would know that authority comes from God to humans, therefore they would appreciate and pray for civil authorities. Hence, the work uses contextual exegetical approach. This method combines rhetorical and literary analysis in the quest for theological meaning. Furthermore, it is a synchronic approach, this is because, it seeks to co-ordinate the different levels of meaning, the literary and theological, the historical and the hermeneutical with a view to drawing out the meaning and message of biblical text at the level of its composition and for today.*

KEYWORDS: prayer, civil, authority, Christian, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Most exegetes regard 1Timothy 2:1-7 as a general command for Christians to pray for all people and government leaders.¹ Some argue that the Pastoral Epistles' author exhorts his readers to pray in order to have a Christian bourgeois ideal that confirms Greco-Roman values of good citizenship. Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann argue that "the ideal of Christian citizenship is depicted in this passage." This ideal of a peaceful life stands in stark contrast to Paul's understanding of

¹Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 162.

existence, which reflects the many conflicts in his life.”² Other commentators argue that the command to pray is simply a digression from the letter's main point.³ Nonetheless, this paper contends that in this passage, Paul exhorts the Christians of Ephesus to pray for all people, including kings, in order for God's mission to bring salvation to all humanity to be fulfilled.⁴

Just like Ephesus during the time of St. Paul, Nigeria as a nation has produced eminent men and women at various levels of leadership. Even though these leaders have at various times led the citizens through brief moments of peace and prosperity, they have also seen incessant ethno-religious crises, kidnappings, herdsmen/terrorists attacks, political confusion, fuel scarcity, power shortage, infrastructure decay etc. These have created a tendency in Nigerians to blame civil leaders for the degeneration of the country into a nation where “poverty has overtaken our wealth and affluence... where policy formulations have no focus... where the general deteriorating social and economic conditions have led to the breeding of children that are physically weak, intellectually stunted and morally debased.”⁵ While it could be argued that both the citizens and the leaders have contributed to these mistakes, many Nigerians would nonetheless argue that in most cases the citizens are powerless, when from one political era to the other, the socio-political system is hijacked and frustrated by men and women, according to Cletus Gotan “who are lacking in vision, insensitive and unaccountable, greedy and corrupt, bereft of a sense of responsibility, arrogant and dictatorial, and unable to exercise discipline and maturity in management of people and resources.”⁶

²Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, “The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles,” *Hermeneia* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 2004). Benjamin Fiore, “The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus,” *Sacra Pagina Series* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2009); Margaret M. Mitchell, “Corrective Composition, Corrective Exegesis: The Teaching on Prayer in 1 Tim. 2,1-15,” in *1 Timothy Reconsidered*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2008), 41–62.

³ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Understanding the Bible Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 62.

⁴ Terry L. Wilder, “Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and the Pastoral Epistles,” in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 28–51. Luke T. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, Anchor Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 55-98.

⁵ Sylvanus I. Udoidem, “The Philosopher in the Market Place: Reflection on the Future of Nigeria,” *Inaugural Lecture Series No. 49* (Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press, 2006), 22-23.

⁶ Cletus Gotan, “Leadership and Ethnicity: The Samaritan as a Model” in *Ethnicity and Christian Leadership in West African Sub-Region*, eds. Ferdinand Nwaigbo, et. al (Port Harcourt: CIWA Publications, 2004), 22-41.

In the context of such leadership conditions, how does the Nigerian Christian respond to the injunction of 1 Timothy 2:2 to “pray for kings and all in authority”? It is common knowledge that different Christian groups have different attitudes towards civil authority in response to this dilemma. On the one hand, some Christian groups have taken a position against every political leadership in Nigeria, and have even gone as far as constituting prayer movements to combat the evil men and women in civil authority. Some Christian leaders have directly confronted, castigated and periodically prophesied the overthrow of the bad leaders in Nigeria. On the other hand, there are some Christian leaders and groups who are always willing to join forces with any political leader irrespective of his/her moral stance and orientation. Such groups are always at hand to praise and bless the activities of any political office holder in as much as those praises and blessing translate at the end of the day into concrete material benefits and rewards.

The above situates Nigerian Christians within the long and complex history of Christianity. Within the New Testament itself, Christian relationship with civil authority is not uniform. The author of the book of Revelation, living in a politically oppressive context differs greatly from the author of 1 Timothy or Titus (3:1). Paul’s instruction on Christian relationship with the civil authority in his Letter to the Romans (13: I -7) could be slightly differentiated from that given by the author of 1 Peter (2:13-17). Whereas the book of Revelation does not see any moral justification for supporting an oppressive government, 1 Timothy recommends prayer on behalf of the civil authority of his time. This recommendation becomes particularly interesting because it offers us an insight into the complex situation of the Christian church within the context of distorted world order, with all its imperfections, not least the imperfect and perhaps an abusive political leadership. Thus even in this context, the Christian community is urged to live out its responsibility of praying for its leaders. This is brought out by exegetically analyzing 1 Tim. 2:1-7 within its historical, literary and theological contexts. This is feasible using the contextual exegetical approach. This method combines rhetorical and literary analysis in the quest for theological meaning.”⁷ Furthermore, it is a synchronic approach, this is because, it seeks to co-ordinate the different levels of meaning, the literary and theological, the historical and the hermeneutical with a view to drawing out the meaning and message of biblical text at the level of its composition and for today.⁸

⁷ Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1-42* WUNT Series 31/2 Tübingen: JCB Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1988), 50.

⁸ Okure, 50.

1 Tim 2:1-7 and its Translation (NRS)

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is right and acceptable before God our Savior, ⁴ who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶ who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle, I am telling the truth; I am not lying, a teacher of the gentiles in faith and truth.

Delimitation

1 Tim 2:1-7 is marked off from what precedes and what follows.⁹ The *oun* (then) in 2:1 guarantees that the hearer knows that it is because of all that Paul has said up to now, that he is now commanding prayers to be said. There is a single theme followed by a related digression. The theme is prayer in the Church. In vv. 1-7, the need for prayer is inculcated and stress is laid on its universal scope, embracing all kinds of people. After giving the theological backing for prayer for all people on the basis of the universal character of the gospel (vv.3-7), the author returns to the theme announced in 2:1ff;and then begins a fresh unit with a statement of the moral requirements for prayer, first in respect of men in verse 8 thus, *boulomai oun proseuchesthai tous andras en panti topō epairontas hosious cheiras chōris orgēs kai dialogismou* (I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument) and then in respect of women in verse 9, *hōsautōs kai gunaikas en katastolē kosmō meta aidous kai sōphrosunēs* (also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently)...; the two are treated as separate categories, which must reflect something about the relationships within the church.¹⁰

In terms of grammar, the soteriological point of 1Timothy 2:1-7, is the repeated use of the term *pas* (all).Its occurrence in the pericope is thematic, thereby establishing a universal emphasis which is probably polemical. In vv. 1-2 “all people” and “all who are in authority” are to be prayed for; and the outcome of prayer for government, is to be a life, lived in “all godliness and holiness.” In v. 4, God’s will is that “all people be saved,” which resonates with the declaration in vv. 5b-6a,

⁹ Howard I. Marshall, “The Pastoral Epistles” in *The International Critical Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, eds. J.A. Emerton, F. B.A et. al,(London: T&T Clark, 2007), 415.

¹⁰ Marshall, 416-417.

that “the human being, Christ Jesus, gave himself for all.”¹¹ With some of these evidences, this article holds that 1 Tim. 2:1-7 forms a compact and self contained unit.

Immediate Context

In this pericope, the function of the conjunction *oun* can be viewed as both inferential and transitional.¹² *Oun* (then) refers to the preceding section, where Paul urged (*parekalesa*) Timothy to stay in Ephesus, “to instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine.” Furthermore, both 1:3-20 and 2:1-7 share the following themes: salvation (1:15; see.2:3), Paul’s call (1:12, 27; see. 2:7), *didaska-* word group (*heterodidaskaleō*, 1:3; *nomodidaskalos*, 1:7; *didaskalia*, 1:10; see *didaskalos*, 2:7), ungodliness (*asebēs*, 1:9), and godliness (*eusebeia*, 2:2), king (*basilei tōn aiōnōn*, 1:17 see *basileōn*, 2:2), only/one God (*monōtheō*, 1:17 see. *eistheos*, 2:5), and knowledge (*noeō*, 1:7; *oida*, 1:9; see *epignōsis*, 2:4). In this context, the post-positive *oun* can be translated as “therefore.” Furthermore, *oun* can function as a transitional conjunction in this verse, signaling a shift in the letter’s theme from the topic of Paul’s calling to the instruction of prayer. As a result, the majority of English translations translate *oun* as “then” or “now.” This transition indicates that 2:1-7 is still linked to the preceding passage, while Paul also moves on to another point of discussion (vv. 11-15),¹³ where he instructs women at the church in Ephesus to dress modestly, submit to men, and carry out their domestic duties in order to live in godliness and dignity, as written in 2:2.

Literary Structure of 1 Tim 2:1-7

A. The Instruction: Prayer for All Humanity (vv. 1-2a)

B. The Purpose: The Ideal of good Christian citizenship (v. 2b)

B’. Divine Reason: God’s Desire to Save All Humankind (vv. 3-4)

C. The Basis: One God and One Mediator (vv. 5-6)

¹¹Philip H. Towner, “The Letters to Timothy and Titus” in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, eds.Ned B. Stonehouse et al. (Grand Rapids: William E. Eerdmans, 2006), 165.

¹²See. “οὐν,” BDAG 736-37.

¹³Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 416.

The Model: Paul's Mission (v. 7)¹⁴

The above structure of 1 Tim 2:1-7, brings out four important points. First, Paul instructs that prayer be given for all people and for those in authority. What seems puzzling is that the purpose of the prayer for all people is left implicit. However, the purpose clause in verse 2b, explains the subsequent prayer focus on those in authority. Second, Paul lays out God's will for salvation, which determines the thrust of the prayer and the entire unit. The main concern is salvation. Third, this declaration of God's will is surprising or significant enough to warrant its own justification. Paul draws on traditional theological concepts and Christological materials to demonstrate God's universal salvific will in this regard. Finally, Paul connects his prayer for the salvation of all to his mission to the Gentiles.¹⁵

Exegetical Analysis of 1 Tim 2:1-7

The exegesis of the text would be done based on the structure discussed above.

Verses 1-2a: The Instruction: Prayer for All Humanity

The tone of the instruction is personal and somewhat urgent in verses 1-2a. The verb, *parakalō* expresses a command within the context of a mutual relationship and can mark the beginning of the instructional part of a letter. Although the instruction is addressed to the churches, it is conveyed via Timothy, who is responsible for leadership.

The superlative *prōton* stresses either priority or importance of the instruction. Here, it might simply indicate that, this is the first instruction given in the letter. Or the meaning might be “above all” implying that this is the most important instruction and therefore the first that should happen in the church. Since this is the first command in the letter intended for the Church, the priority given to it probably also implies its importance for church life.¹⁶

The complementary infinitive, *poieisthai* expresses the content of the message. It may be understood as a passive with its four accusative subjects which are to be “done” by the unnamed actor (the Church), or as a middle with unexpressed accusative *tous anthrōpous*, as “subject.”

¹⁴Towner, “The Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 164.

¹⁵Towner, “The Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 164.

¹⁶Marshall, 418-419.

There are four terms used in describing prayer, and characterize it in its totality, and emphasize the scope of the responsibility which has “all people” in view.

- i. *Deēsis*: This is a general term for a petition; placed at the head of the list, it implies actively petitioning God to act on behalf of the people.
- ii. *Proseuchē*: This refers to a more general term for any kind of prayer (see Rom. 1:10; 1 Thess. 1:2; Eph. 1:16; Philm. 4); intercession for various things is often in view, as it is here (see Rom. 15:30; Philm. 22).
- iii. *Enteuzis*: it is a petition or request addressed to a superior, hence in this context, a prayer.
- iv. *Eucharistia*: Thanksgiving or the expression of thanks. It is a normal part of prayer; the assumption is that, when praying, the congregation remembers with gratitude how former prayers have been answered, and therefore prays with all the more confidence; in fact, “in their request, they can already express their gratitude for the expected answer” (see Eph. 5:4; Phil. 4:6; Col. 2:7; 4:2).¹⁷

Paul's use of the above terms, in addition to emphasizing the importance of prayer in Christian life, demonstrates the universal scope of prayer: *huper pantōn anthrōpōn* (on behalf of and for the salvation of all human beings).

Verse 2b: The Purpose: The Ideal of Good Christian Citizenship

Verse 2 appears to be a tangent. It is concerned with prayer for a specific group of people, with the goal of allowing Christians to live peacefully.

In verse 2b, Paul exhorts the Christians of Ephesus, *huper basileōn kai pantōn tōn en huperochē ontōn* (to pray on behalf of kings and all those in positions of authority).¹⁸ Despite the fact that *basileus* could refer to any ruler in the Hellenistic world, including Roman client kings (see Mark 6:14; Acts 12:1; 25:13), the term most likely refers to the Roman emperor in this context. This passage has been interpreted by some as an exhortation to Christians to pray for the government, as part of their civic responsibility. To support the preceding, Marshall cites the exhortation to pray for kings in order to live a peaceful and quiet life, which is a traditional principle that all Christians should follow:

¹⁷Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 419.

¹⁸See. Gerhard Delling, “ὑπερέχω, ὑπεροχή” *TDNT* 8:523-24.

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Its inclusion here, however, is not surprising given the NT household codes' traditional emphasis on the church's responsibility to the State. The customary verb (*hupotassesthai*; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; Tit. 3:1) is used elsewhere to describe this responsibility, and the duties and motivations associated with 'submission' vary (for example, paying taxes in Rom. 13:7; 'honouring' in 1 Pet. 2:17; and 'obeying' in Tit. 3:1 those in authority). Prayer for those in positions of authority could be considered an application of the traditional principle here.¹⁹

“People are led to believe that the author was attempting to counter imperial cult and make it appear very likely that the author of the Pastorals was consciously attempting to present Christ as the true savior of the human race over against the false savior Caesar,” according to Anthony T. Hanson.²⁰ As a result, Paul exhorts the Ephesian Christians to pray to God on the emperor's behalf rather than to the emperor himself.

In 1 Timothy, the word *basileus* (king) appears three times. Only one of them (1 Tim. 2:2) refers to a human king; the remaining occurrences refer to God (1:17), and Christ Jesus (6:15). Interestingly, Paul gives God and Jesus the King some majestic attributes but none to earthly kings. According to Paul, God the King of honor and glory is the King of ages (*tō basilei tōn aiōnōn*), the immortal (*aphthartō*), the invisible (*aoratō*), and the only (*monō*) King. Paul believes in God and in Jesus as the ultimate King who is greater than all earthly kings. God is the only One who can provide a peaceful and quiet life, not an emperor.

Hina ēremon kai hesuchion bion diagōmen (to pray to God so that they may live a peaceful and quiet life), Paul exhorts the Christians. The *hina* (so that) may express the purpose of the prayer; most likely, the intended result of prayer for the authorities is in mind. He defines observable “life” as one lived among people in society in a way that registers.²¹ The initial descriptions of this life, “quiet and peaceful,” express the Hellenistic ideal of a tranquil life free of the hassles of a turbulent

¹⁹Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 420.

²⁰Anthony T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters: Commentary on the First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus*, *Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 187-88.

²¹Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 422.

society. It is obvious that Paul envisions the state, with God's assistance, as capable of ensuring the conditions that would allow such a life to be possible.²²

The prepositional phrase which closes the sentence, *en pasē eusebeia kai semnotēti* (in all godliness and dignity), uses current ethical language to describe the life of faith and the manner (*en + dat.*) in which the Christian is to pursue life. *Eusebeia* describes spiritual life from the interrelated perspectives of knowledge of God and the life which that knowledge produces.²³ As Paul understands it, the potential to live this life characterized by the integration of knowledge and behaviour (faith and deeds), is linked to the appearance of Christ in human history (see Titus 2:11-12). What should not be confused here are the ideal circumstances for life, sought in prayer for the state (“the quiet and peaceful life”). *Eusebeia* (Godliness) as authentic Christian existence is expected in all situations, tranquil or turbulent (2 Tim. 3:12). Prayer for the tranquil setting is prayer for an ideal set of social circumstances in which Christians might give unfettered expression to their faith in observable living. Hence, the Church is to pray for the salvation of “all,” and it participates in that mission by making God present in society its genuine expression of the new life for all to see.²⁴

Semnotēs adds the idea of serious and worthy behaviour to the picture of genuine Christian existence. This is a quality especially expected in Church leaders, but here required of the congregation generally. Although it has an inward dimension, there is also an outward orientation. The behaviour of believers should be such as to win respect from other people because they take life seriously, and devoutly, and do not riffle. Hence, *eusebeia* and *semnotēs* together describe a life that is completely acceptable both to God and people,²⁵ and aim of this living is salvific.

Verses 3-4: Divine Reason: God’s Desire to Save All Humanity

In these verses, Paul proceeds directly to show that prayer for the salvation of all accords God’s will. He does this in two stages, first (v. 3), he places the Church’s prayer into an OT cultic framework whereby prayer becomes the latter-day acceptable sacrifice. Second, in (v. 4), he goes on to

²²Towner, “The Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 169.

²³Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 423.

²⁴ Towner, “The Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 170.

²⁵ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 423.

spell out God's salvific will.²⁶ *Touto* (this) in v. 3, must refer back to the universal prayer in (v. 1), and not just to prayer for rulers, for the description of God as *sōtēr* (saviour), corresponds to the more general prayer for salvation of all.

The phrase, *touto kalon kai apodekton* (This is right and is acceptable) is patterned after the formula, *to kalon kai to areston enanton kuriou tou theou sou* (because you will do what is right and good in the eyes of the LORD your God --Deut. 12:25, 28; 13:19; 21:9:), which describes various kinds of behaviour as in keeping with the law and therefore as meeting God's standard. Its usage here connects the church with the OT people of God to whom God gave instructions that their behaviour might be unique, unlike the nations around them. The phraseology here may reflect the cultic use of *dektos* to refer to sacrifices which are acceptable to God (see Lev. 1:3ff); in the NT, the *dektos* word-group functions similarly (see Rom. 15:16; Phil. 4:18; 1 Pet. 2:5). In this context it is the community's prayer which is evaluated as being *kalon* (see 1:8; for the phrase, see 1 Cor. 7:26), and *apodektos* (acceptable: see 5:4; 1:15), in the NT community of God, prayer in the Church replaces sacrifice. Furthermore, the phrase, *enōpion tou sōtēros hēmōn theou* (in the sight of God our Savior), establishes that the behaviour is judged to be good and acceptable by God. In both the OT use and here, the phrase may express the ideas of God's presence, or God's assessment, and the thought of accountability may be in view.²⁷ Each nuance would fit the worship setting of this instruction; but in any case, it describes behaviour which typifies the life of God's people.

The description of God in his character as Saviour corresponds to the theme of salvation in verse 4. He is presented as the source of salvation, the architect of the plan of salvation. As Saviour, he calls for the involvement of his people in and through their prayer for all.

Salvation is meant for everyone. The verb, *thelō* can have a strong sense of "to will" and the weaker sense "to wish, desire." It should be interpreted as indicating God's universal intention, rather than some form of exclusivism. *Pantas anthrōpous* (everyone/all men), in verse 4, continues the theme of universality which at times is misconstrued, but reference is made mainly with the Pauline mission to the Gentiles in mind (v.7). But the reason behind Paul's justification of his universal mission is almost certainly the false teaching, with its Torah-centred approach to life that included

²⁶ Towner, "The Letters to Timothy and Titus," 175.

²⁷ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 425.

either an exclusivist bent, or a downplaying of the Gentile mission.²⁸ From the human side, the process of salvation, of coming to faith, can be described in various ways. Paul explains the process by means of the phrase, *kai eis epignōsin alētheias elthein* (and come to the knowledge of the truth).

The conjunction, *kai* (and) connects the verbs *sōthēnai* (to save) to the clause *eis epignōsin alētheias elthein*. If copulative, it would permit the ideas of being saved and coming to knowledge of the truth to be distinguished. Simpson tentatively suggests two levels of saving, general preservation (first element) and spiritual salvation (second element).²⁹ There is, however, no hint of two classes of beneficiaries or of the possibility of receiving one element without the other. It gives better sense to read the *kai* exegetically (“to be saved, that is to come to a knowledge of the truth”) or take the two infinitives as a hendiadys (“to be saved through coming to a knowledge of the truth”).³⁰ Whichever of these overlapping interpretations is adopted, “to come to a knowledge of truth” explicates the idea of being saved. In the Pastoral Epistles, *alētheia* (see. Tit. 1:1) refers to the authentic revelation of God bringing salvation.

The phrase, *eis epignōsin alētheias elthein* with *alētheia* as its object, this conversion is envisaged through acceptance of the truth taught by Paul (v. 7). Since 1Timothy also associates salvation with coming to believe in Christ (see. 1:15-16; see. 4:10), it seems that believing in Christ and recognizing the truth are contiguous if not equivalent concepts. Nonetheless, while recognition of truth must include a noetic component, more is implied than “the intellectual acceptance of Christianity.”³¹ The concept embraces a decisive “moment of recognition, that is, of appropriation and practical realization” which shows itself in a life conformed to the truth of the gospel.

Verses 5-6: The Basis: One God and One Mediator

At the beginning of this section, Paul inserts a supportive *gar* (for) theological piece crafted from traditional theological and Christological statements. Three emphases will emerge. First, the theme of universality and open access to salvation continues to direct the thought. But, secondly, this is juxtaposed to exclusive theological and Christological claims that locate the means of salvation

²⁸ J. Sell, *The Knowledge of the Truth* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1982), 11-16.

²⁹ See. Marshall, 427-28 and n. 44.

³⁰ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 427-28 and n. 44.

³¹ Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters*, 68.

for all in a single person. Third, as theology turns to Christology, Paul again places the heaviest accent on humanity of Christ.³²

Paul begins with theology to ground God's universal will to save. The *eis theos* formula provides evidence that God's salvific will is indeed universal, the movement of thought within the sentence gets quickly to Christ's role as a sole mediator of salvation. Beyond this, the implication is that the one gospel that proclaims the Christ-event is that which he preaches.³³

From here, Christology takes over, and the universal claim is attached to a very particular person. "One Mediator" accomplishes the universal plan of the one God (v. 5a). The term "mediator" derived from the Hellenistic commercial and legal world to describe a negotiator who helps two parties to make some kind of transaction.³⁴ The Pauline use of it is more directly influenced by religious applications and it is because of the task of mediation that Jesus is not placed directly alongside the father but rather between him and humankind (see. 1 Cor. 8:6).

The intention of the phrase, *anthrōpos Christos Iēsous* is best seen here in its reference both backwards and forwards. First, it is as a human being that he "mediates" between God and humanity. Second, it is in his humanity that he carries out his redemptive mission which culminated in his self-giving.³⁵ The placement of *anthrōpos* designation between "mediator" and the tradition cited in v. 6a, is intended to locate the mediating activity of Christ Jesus specifically in his humanity. What Jesus did to execute God's universal will to save, he did as a human being, in complete solidarity with the human condition.³⁶

In v. 6a, Paul's argument concludes with a Christological explanation of Christ's act of mediation: "*ho dous heauton antilutron huper pantōn*" (who gave himself a ransom for all). The phrase is based on the saying of Jesus and expresses a doctrine of redemption which was still alive for the Pastoral Epistles (see Titus 2:14). The formulation is a version of the saying in Mark 10:45 (*dounai tēn psuchēn autou lutron anti pollōn*) in better Greek.³⁷ Some of the alterations may have been made to fit the new context. Thus, the change to the aorist participle, *dous* is required because the

³² Towner, "The Letters to Timothy and Titus," 179-180.

³³ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 428-429.

³⁴ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 429-430.

³⁵ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 430.

³⁶ Towner, "The Letters to Timothy and Titus," 183.

³⁷ Towner, "The Letters to Timothy and Titus," 183.

statement in this context does not function to express purpose (as *dounai* does in Mark 10:45), but rather to describe an event which has happened in the past, and also because the participle forms the relative connection necessary in this context with the preceding *anthrōpos Christos Iēsous* (man Christ Jesus).³⁸

The key elements of the phrase, *ho dous heauton antilutron huper pantōn*, in each application are a verb denoting “giving,” the reflexive pronoun “himself” that lays emphasis on the voluntary self-offering, a preposition that conveys the effects of his offering to others, a recipient, and an indication of purpose (variously expressed). Paul’s usual preference to apply the work of Christ to “us” (Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:2; Titus 2:14) is shifted to “all.” While this shift might be regarded as a clarification of the Marcan tradition’s “many” (*anti pollōn*), we should rather think that Paul’s widening of the scope from his more typical “us,” to “all,” is determined by the universal thrust of the passage. His choice of the preposition *huper* (for) instead of Mark’s *anti* (for) is normal, and his consistent use of the reflexive pronoun *heauton* (himself) in place of the semitic “his life” is an improvement in the Greek.³⁹ Where the saying most resembles the Son of Man logion is in the interpretation of the giving as *antilutron* (a ransom). For this, Paul replaces Mark’s *lutron* with the rare compound *antilutron*. This shift may intensify the sense of substitution, or render the idea into more suitable Greek; but it expresses the same sense of a ransom payment that secures release (of someone or something).⁴⁰

The portrayal of the act of mediation contains several elements. First, the saying interprets Jesus’ death as a voluntary act of self-sacrifice. The verb *didōmi* (to give) in some contexts expressed the idea of a martyr’s death, and came to be used to describe Jesus’ death as an act of sacrifice he intentionally undertook. As the statement is constructed here (active substantival participle referring to Jesus; see the divine passive in Rom. 4:25), it portrays Jesus as the responsible actor. The reflexive pronoun *heauton* (himself) makes Jesus the object of his own action, reinforcing the idea of selflessness.⁴¹

Second, the prepositional phrase *pantōn* perhaps strengthened by the rare form of “ransom,” underlines two interrelated elements in the theology of Jesus’ self-offering: he died as both a

³⁸ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 431.

³⁹ Towner, “The Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 183.

⁴⁰ F. Buchsel, *TDNT* 4:340-56.

⁴¹ Towner, “The Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 184.

representative and a substitute. In doing so, the sense of his solidarity with the intended recipient (“all of us”) is implicit here; here, following the phrase, *anthrōpos Christos Iēsous* (man Christ Jesus), the emphasis is on his solidarity with the human race.⁴²

The phrase, *to marturion kairois idios* is enigmatic. It either concludes or was appended to the traditional material to make the transition to the personal statement which follows *marturion* (see 2 Tim. 1:8) is “witness,” either the act of bearing witness or the content, a piece of evidence, thus “the Christian Message.” “Testimony...is...not only a means of persuasion ...but it adds the seal of conviction.”⁴³ *Kairois idios*, functions here in precisely the same way as it does in Titus 1:3, to underline the fact that the time in view is the time appropriate in God’s plans for “testimony” (Gal. 4:4).⁴⁴ The term corresponds to the apostolic proclamation in Acts 4:33; 2 Thessalonians 1:10 and 2 Timothy 1:8. On the analogy of Titus 1:1-3, where Paul’s apostolic calling is identified with the salvation-historical (*Kairois idios*) manifestation of God’s word, it would seem that this phrase intends similarly to identify the message of the self-offering of Christ with the apostolic ministry to which (v. 7) Paul is called.

Verse 7: Paul as a Model of Christian Mission

Paul demonstrates to his audience in 1 Timothy 2:1-7 what it means to carry out God's mission in one's life: "For which I myself was appointed a *kēruz* (herald), and *apostolos* (an apostle), I am telling you the truth, I am not lying, *didaskalos* (a teacher), of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (v. 7). In this verse, Paul describes his roles as a herald, apostle, and teacher.

Among these three titles, herald and teacher are debatable because Paul is commonly referred to as an apostle rather than a herald or a Gentile teacher. The word *kruz* appears only three times in the New Testament (see 1 Tim. 2:7, 2 Tim. 1:1; 2 Pet. 2:5). According to Towner, in the Hellenistic world, this term refers to the task of proclaiming the message and is associated with diplomatic duties.

In the Greek world, the term *kruz* referred to a variety of messengers whose job it was to proclaim a message. Heralds performed diplomatic missions for the royal court while being protected by the country he represented and the deity. He spoke during

⁴²Towner, “The Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 185-186.

⁴³H. Strathmann, *TDNT IV*, 504: see. Acts 4:33; 1 Cor. 1:6; 2:1; 2 Thess. 1:10.

⁴⁴Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 430.

sacrifices and other cultic activities, combining political and religious functions. The herald was required to have a loud voice and to be faithful to the message to be communicated. Philosophers could be referred to as god-heralds.⁴⁵

As a result, the word *kruz* is not used by chance in this passage; rather, Paul carefully selects that word to convey a specific message to his reader. He wants to prove that he is the true messenger from God. This is why the phrase *enpistei kai altheia* (in faith and truth) should be interpreted to refer to the content of Paul's message rather than his attitude toward the message (a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles).

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Paul is widely regarded as the Gentile Apostle (see Rom. 11:13). Furthermore, based on multiple accounts of his encounter with Jesus in Damascus in Acts and Galatians (Acts 13:47; Gal. 2:7-8), one can conclude that God called Paul to be an apostle of the Gentiles. In this text, however, he refers to himself as a "Gentile teacher." As Towner explains, this title refers to the heretical teachings that pervaded the church of Ephesus:

In this context, where "the teaching" was being contested and jeopardized by the activities of false teachers, and where the openness of the gospel to the Gentile world was threatened in some way, the description "teacher of the Gentiles" reminds readers that Paul is the one who has received authority to preach and teach in Gentile churches (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:7-8; Acts 13:47).⁴⁶

By including an oath formula, *alētheian legō ou pseudomai* (I am telling you the truth, I am not lying), Paul confirms his calling as a Gentile teacher: This formula is also found in Rom. 9:1: "I

⁴⁵Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. 187 n. 76.

⁴⁶Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 188.

am speaking the truth in Christ — am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit," and in a condensed version in a few other passages (2 Cor. 12:6; 2 Cor. 11:31; Gal. 1:20). The placement of this formula before the final title is significant because Paul's apostleship was most likely attacked by false teachers, necessitating his defense of his calling. Furthermore, Paul is most likely attempting to contrast himself with the heretical teachers. False teachers do not tell Christians the truth because they are lying, but Paul encourages them to trust in the authenticity and accuracy of his message. As a result, in order to participate in God's mission of saving the sinful world, believers should follow his teachings and live his life.

Summary

This article demonstrated how, in 1Timothy 2:1-7, Paul emphasizes the importance of prayer to God on behalf of all humans, including kings. This command exhorts Christians to live godly and dignified lives as part of their missionary task, in order to complete God's mission to save all people. To carry out this mission, the Church must be willing to confront world values that are diametrically opposed to Christian values.

Theological Considerations of 1Timothy 2:1-7.

The overarching theme of 1Timothy 2:1-7 is controversial among commentators. While some argue that prayer should be the central theme,⁴⁷ others believe that the gospel is a central theme in this discussion.⁴⁸ Others argue that the central idea of this pericope is salvation, because the discussion of prayer occurs only in one verse, while the issue of salvation appears in three (2:4, 5, 6).⁴⁹ Two themes stand out in this section, in my opinion: prayer and salvation. The importance of prayer should not be overlooked in this passage, as Paul uses the phrase *protōn pantōn* before exhorting his readers to pray. Though the term *prōtos* can be translated as "first in a series,"⁵⁰ this adverb is more likely to be read as "priority of importance," because, according to Towner, "often

⁴⁷ John L. Houlden, *The Pastoral Epistles: I and II Timothy, Titus*, in *TPI New Testament Commentaries* (London, England: SCM, 1989), 65.

⁴⁸ R. St. John Parry, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 11; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 416.

⁴⁹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles, Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 76; cf. Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 79-84.

⁵⁰ See. *πρῶτος* BDAG 892.

the first item mentioned is of greatest importance or urgency.”⁵¹ Furthermore, because the topic of prayer continues into vv. 8-11, it is reasonable to assert that prayer is central in 2:1-7.

Paul emphasizes the significance of prayer by using four different expressions: *deēsis* (request), *proseuchē* (prayer), *enteuxis* (intercession), and *eucharistia* (thanksgiving). Apart from emphasizing the importance of prayer in Christian life, Paul's use of those terms demonstrates the universal scope of prayer: on behalf of all humanity and for all human beings' salvation.

The Character of Christian Prayer

Apart from praying for all peoples, 1Timothy specifically singles out the king and those in civil authority, as direct beneficiaries of the Christian prayer. Within the socio-cultural milieu of the Pastoral Letters, one is surprised that the author of 1Timothy would urge his audience to pray for the king and those in high political positions. Within this worldview, prayer offered for kings and emperors were tinted with idolatry since such leaders especially the emperors were sometimes acknowledged as gods and were often so regarded from the time of Augustus. Perhaps this would explain why Paul in his celebrated text of Romans 13, does not mention prayer among the things to be accorded the emperor.

However, from the text, certain elements stand out in the Christian prayer for the king and those in civil authority. In the first place, the author includes the king and those in civil authority. In the first place, the author includes the king and political office holders in the designation of *panta anthrōpōn*-all human beings (2:1). In the NT *anthrōpos* being a generic term for the human being, is always used explicitly or implicitly to contrast the human being from God in his creatureliness, transitoriness, and sinfulness.⁵² From its very nature therefore, *anthrōpos*, whether king or peasant is not divine and cannot claim divine powers that belong to God alone. On the contrary, he stands always in need of God's favour. Evaluating the king and other political office holders as *anthrōpos*, immediately shows a deliberate refusal by the Christians in 1 Timothy, to accord the king and state power, the divine dignity which they would have demanded.

⁵¹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. 162 n. 6.

⁵²J. Stafford Wright, *Anthrōpos* in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol.2ed. Collin Brown (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1976), 564-569.

In their prayer for the civil authority as for others, the Christians first of all, proclaim and affirm the supremacy and divinity of God above all creatures, and by so doing de-sacralize⁵³ the powers of the king, and the uncontrolled authority of those in civil authority. As all other created non-divine beings, the king and holders of political offices too are not divine in spite of, pretences to the contrary. For the early Christians, it was important for political office holders to realize the distinction between them and God, since in most cases mistaking themselves for God, and overstepping their limits in decisions, and actions, always became the cause of unease, and chaos in the civil society. By praying for the king and those in civil authority, Christians subtly remind them to know, and accept their position as creatures of God rather than God himself, in the exercise of their political functions. In this way, Christian prayer becomes a protest against the general propensity of political leaders of all ages, the tendency to self-deification and the sacralization of state power. Whenever those in civil authority live under this illusion of omnipotence, the consequence is always the wanton abuse of power, and undue distraction from their legitimate duty of ensuring the well-being of the citizens, and guaranteeing a life of tranquility, and peace in the civil society.

Another significant outcome of the Christian prayer is that it evokes two important virtues in the citizenry, which in turn dispose the citizens to be governable. They are described in the text as *eusebeia* and *semnotes*. *Eusebeia* could mean devoutness, piety, fear of God or even religion. This word group is relatively rare in the New Testament, but very frequent in the Hellenistic world. The words deriving from the stem *seb-* convey the idea of devoutness and religiousness. This devoutness consists mainly in a holy trepidation, wonder, or admiration called forth by the majesty in things, human beings, or deities.⁵⁴ It connotes a religious homage one has for very different objects like one's country, the environment, parents, and heroes. Not excluding respect for oneself. Thus, *eusebeia* is the virtue of a person who is righteous in his dealings with others and acceptable to God. Its opposite *asebeia* brings out its meaning more clearly; it denotes one who is outrageous, who breaks established laws and ordinances. Although Early Christianity identified *eusebeia* with non-Christian piety, but with the Pastoral Letters, it has also received a Christian content.

⁵³W. Gunther, "Sebomai" in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, ed. Collin Brown (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1976), 91-95.

⁵⁴Klaus Berger dates both 1 Timothy and 1 Clement to the Corinthians at 75 AD. See. K. Berger and Christiane Nord, *Das Neue Testament and Fruhchristliche Schriften*, (Frankfurt am Main: InselVerlag, 1999), 685, 743.

On its part, *semnotes*, denotes that which is sublime, majestic, holy, evoking reverence, in other words, what is worthy of God. When applied to life in general, it indicates its esthetic outlook resulting in a life of decency and orderliness. The combination of these two expressions in 1 Timothy describes the Christian attitude of life in a non-Christian environment. It also provides a model attitude of behaviour for the citizens as an outcome of a properly governed society. Thus when Christians pray for the civil authority, they carry out their functions in the proper order. The result would be the guarantee, not only of tranquility and peace in the society, but above all the creation of a governable society where the citizens are guided by the virtues of godliness, decency, and orderliness.

It is possible to argue that 1 Timothy was motivated by apologetic interest in the recommendation to pray for the civil authority. While one may not completely dismiss such apologetic interest, especially in the circumstances that the Christians found themselves, one must none the less observe that praying for the civil authority by the Christian communities has a long history which 1 Timothy is only a reflection. It is likely also that the early Christians were influenced by early Jewish practice. There is evidence that prayers for political leaders were recommended and often carried out by Jews both in the homeland and in the Diaspora (see. 1 Macc. 7:33; 1 Esra 6:31; Pilo, Gaius 280).

Divine Origin of State Power in a Changing Situation.

Christian responsibility to pray for their civil leaders and the state seems to arise ultimately from an endorsement of the biblical tradition that authority, including civil authority, has a divine origin. Consequently those who exercise state power carry out a divine mandate and operate under divine endorsement for which reason they have to be supported by the Christian community.

Even when Christian history reveals various instances or frictions, confrontations and outright persecution of Christians by holders of state power at different times and places, Christians have always maintained their conviction that they have a duty to pray for their leaders. In some Pauline churches as indicated by Rom. 13, this was seen to include almost an absolute obedience, and respect to the civil authority, as well as payment of dues. On the other hand, changing circumstances in the Pastoral letters must have necessitated the reinterpretation of such tradition. While still retaining the divine origin of state power, the Pastoral letters rejected the near divinization of holders of state power. Even though they could lay claims to the divine origin of their power, they themselves are not divine. They are human beings who in the midst of their fellow human beings exercise the divine mandate for the common good of God's creation. Thus,

they are responsible for maintaining peace, order and tranquility in the society. This is the very purpose of God constituting state power. On failing in this duty, political officeholders or state power are to be held responsible, not God.

The divine origin of state authority does not translate into deification of holders of political offices nor of the state power itself. The divine origin of the state authority is preserved as long as the holders of state power carry out their divine mandate. Christians recognize the divine origin of the authority by assisting the holders of state power not to abuse the divine mandate, and thereby frustrate the divine plan which is an orderly society. Thus, to preserve the divine intention for instituting state authority, Christians assist the holders of political office to carry out their God-given assignments through a level of relationship. From a relationship characterized by merely obedience, respect, and paying dues advocated by Paul (Rom. 13), Christian relationship with the state developed into a genuine demand for good governance expressed in a non-violent liturgical act: prayer (1 Tim. 2). This new relationship calls for responsibility rather than negative criticism of political office holders. Even when they felt that there were deviations and abuses in the exercise of state power, Christians genuinely assisted holders of political office through prayer to fulfill their divine mandate. It was for the common good and important for the holders of political office to be conscious of this divine mandate by being responsible and accountable to God and responsive to the society. It is likely that just as the changing situation in the internal organization of the Pauline churches led to the structural reorganization of the churches of the Pastoral letters; the reinterpretation of the traditional political relation must have been necessitated by new developments in interaction with their socio-political environment. This change in attitude could have become necessary on account of the propensity of contemporary civil rulers to self-deification and sacralization of their power.

Application of 1 Tim. 2:1-7 in Nigerian Context

From the analysis of the text under study, and in line with prevailing theology of the Pastoral Letters in general, it becomes clear that Christians have a responsibility to help build an orderly human community where peace, tranquility, and the worship of God prevail. One of the areas which they could do this is by assisting those in civil authority to become conscious of their responsibility, in accomplishing their divine mandate for the human society. This Christian responsibility remains always valid, irrespective of the quality of leadership exhibited by those in civil authority or their disposition towards the Christian community. Christian history shows that Christians have been assuming this responsibility even in times of bitter persecution, and political mismanagement of the state.

It is from this perspective that this essay proposes a reevaluation of the predominant negative reaction of majority of Nigerians to the civil authority on the one hand, and criminal complicity on the other. In saying this, the Christian is not ignorant of the deficiencies of the Nigerian politician, neither is the Christian action equivalent to the exoneration of their crime, it is rather a way of making real the Christian gospel of extending God's love to even those who hate us through their action.

In the first place, it would be immoral for anyone to justify the wantonness, and callousness of the Nigerian political class. The propensity to self-deification and the sacralization of state power have given the average Nigerian politician the impression that he is superhuman, who is beyond good and evil. He lives above everything and everybody; with powers to do anything and everything whenever he wants and however he wants them done. Thus, the Nigerian politician can kill fellow citizens, instigate riots, sponsor robberies and kidnappings; destroy peoples' homes and whole villages; train and own gangs of armed bandits, while at the same time also owning and running religious organization. There are some who have unlimited access to the public treasury, from where they enrich themselves, their families, and friends, and all who are ready to sing their praises and do their bidding. All these are well known facts about the Nigerian political ruling class.

It is also a known fact that the Nigerian politician is a product of a long and complicated political history. The older ones were born in the colonial era, lived through military dictatorship, some are in addition traditional dictators in their villages while others have feudal lords as political mentors and sponsors. The younger politicians are mainly young people who were born into the military dictatorship of the late 60s and early 70s. Many of the lawmakers are themselves former military dictators or people who grew up in a non-democratic tradition. In effect, most of the politicians have never experienced any other form of government except the ones they are experimenting with themselves.

Fully aware of this real problem facing the Nigerian politician, its consequences on the Nigerian citizen, and the integrity of the Nigerian nation; the Nigerian Christian should opt for a new mode of relationship with the political class. This involves sincere prayers for Nigerian civil authority, instead of castigation and condemnation, which for all these years have failed to have effect on this group of persons. It is true that some prayers have been offered on behalf of the ruling class in the past, such prayers in the past failed to produce results because most of those who are involved in the composition and offering of such prayers are often collaborators, and accomplices

of the same politicians in their oppressive dealings with the citizens. Many Christian leaders pray for politicians and in return demand for favours, ranging from political appointments for themselves, their family members and friends, disproportionate stipends, and other monetary gratifications at the end of the prayer sessions. Some actually apply for invitations to pray at government circles and offer to bless non-existing government programmes and projects. As an Atyap proverb says, “*kā anhu ka ya shita, ka seén dyiát katuk bá*” (when the mouth has eaten pepper, it utters no evil). One hardly wonders why Christian prayers in most cases do not produce the desired results.

For the Christian prayer therefore to be effective, Christian Churches and their leaders, individually and collectively, should first of all, distance themselves from every form of complicity with incompetent, and corrupt politicians, especially by rejecting or soliciting for all forms of gratifications. This will give the Christian community the needed courage, and prophetic spirit to pray against the self-deification of such politicians, and the sacralization of state power, which in fact is the major source of the Nigerian political problem. Whenever state power is divinized or sacralized, it is automatically de-humanized, and this is what we see in all forms of absolutist perception, and wielding of political power.⁵⁵ Thus, such Christian prayer should be radical enough to demand for the desacralization of the powers of those in civil authority, and the humanization of their persons, it should affirm the supremacy of God, and the divine origin of every human authority, and the consequences of these realities; accountability, orderliness in the society, and the peace, and tranquility that naturally flow into the true worship of God.

Christian prayer is further strengthened when Christian persons take up responsibility to claim the divine mandate to direct the affairs of the state in line with the content, and demand of the Christian prayer itself. But since experience shows that some Christian people who take up political office often get belittled on account of inexperience. It is important that proper political formation should form part of the Christian prayer for the realization of the divine mandate. Christian political formation should be able to introduce into the Nigerian political system, the Christian understanding of leadership, as service carried out by humans, in the midst of other humans, for the welfare of the human society. Political leadership should be seen properly within the context

⁵⁵Martin O. Egbugu, *Christianity and the De-Sacralization of State Power: An Insight into the Theological Basis of Democracy* (Enugu: SNAAP, 2006), 285.

where it belongs, as one of the many gifts of the spirit meant for the building up of the community (1 Cor. 12:28).

It is properly the responsibility of the Christian community to see that this divine mandate is carried out by those who are competent to understand political leadership as such. It belongs therefore to Christian action to take active part in the process of selecting such competent persons that will ensure that the divine mandate is done. Christians cannot under any pretext abandon this divine responsibility. Christian prayer is, therefore all embracing, but with only one goal, the realization of the divine will for the human society as orderly, peaceful, and tranquil, as envisaged by 1 Timothy.

CONCLUSION

The changing circumstances in the later periods of the Pauline Churches necessitated the redefinition, and reinterpretation of the Pauline traditions. Just as the events in the church itself led to the structural reorganization of the inner life of the Church, external relations with the Greco-Roman environment also resulted in the reevaluation of the relationship with the political power structure of the state. Paul had recommended almost an unqualified obedience, respect, and the prompt payment of taxes, and dues, in as much as authority of the state has divine origin. This recommendation was interpreted in this later period, to mean radical prayer for those in power, not to overstep the boundaries of their powers. We have in the foregoing, read this text within the Nigerian political system. The Nigerian Christians should be constructive in their criticisms. They should not negatively castigate their civil authorities in spite of their deficiencies; rather they have to assist them also through prayers, to realize the limits of their powers as human beings, recognizing the divine origin of their authority and its consequences. Within this context, Christian prayer is embracing. It takes into account, the complex nature of the political history of the politician itself; it also involves a just demand for the defense of the divine mandate for the politician to keep God's created order peace and tranquility. Since the Christian principle of leadership emphasizes the indispensability of service for the good of the community, Christian prayer should involve the assumption of political roles, as aspects of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by competent Christians who would be in place to bring this Christian principle to bear.