

## **Praying for the Church that is in a War Zone**

Ps. Craig Mobey (based on an article by Jesse Johnson)

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The war in Ukraine is worrisome for many reasons, is it the start of World War 3? How will it affect fuel prices etc.? I was wondering if church buildings would be spared from the bombing, I like to think so. At the same time, I also assumed that Sunday worship could somehow continue, and apart from a fleeting prayer—sadly—did not give much more thought to the situation.

That is until I read an article by Jesse Johnson who writes of a minister in Ukraine who is, for safety reasons, housing children in the safety of the basement of the church, while their parents remained in their apartments.

### **Scripture Readings (NIV)**

We will read Scripture as we work through today's message.

### **Introduction**

I must confess that although my mind was on Sunday worship, world peace and fuel prices, it was an awakening to read that the minister was hosting evening prayer meetings, for his congregation as well as the children's parents.

The following is their "prayer guide" that Johnson says will be useful for praying during any trial or difficulty.

### **Principle #1: Thank God for Who He is**

Acts 4:24-31, *"When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.' Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'* After they prayed, the place

*where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”*

The disciples were facing the church’s first persecution and they prayed these words. Although they were aware of their hardship, their response was to turn to God and to declare who He is.

War and persecution do not change who God is. By declaring who God is, is to draw strength and encouragement from who God is and all that He has done for His people. It speaks of a relationship with God, as opposed to a “shopping list” prayer style.

Thanking God for who He is, is a confession of the goodness and greatness of God. We need to remind ourselves of who He is when the world around us, appears to close in.

An absence of a physical and observable war does not mean there is no spiritual war. The devil is like a roaring lion seeking to devour. He is constantly busy with schemes and the like. In this war, human weaponry is not going to help. God is fighting for us, Jesus has defeated Satan and redeemed us. Ours is to resist and to be found in Christ. We have the assurance of eternal life, Godly armour, a victorious God who will not forsake us, and a Godly mission. In our moment of need, God will not abandon us, withhold His grace, mercy, or love.

I love the wording in the apostle’s prayer, “*Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.*” Persecution was not going to stop them or rob them of their purpose and focus.

### **Pray that God Will Guard Us from Worry**

*Jeremiah 17:7-8, “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”*

Jeremiah was facing a national collapse and the Babylonians would conquer Jerusalem; the city would fall to them. Jeremiah’s trust was in God and his goal was to stand strong in God, despite what was happening.

Is worry a failure in faith or trust? I will leave it to you to think about this.

Khalifa said, “*Worrying is like walking around with an umbrella waiting for it to rain.*” John Locke said something that I am still thinking deeply about, “*What worries you masters you.*” Perhaps, for now, we can say to each other something like, “*worry looks around while faith looks up.*”

However, being concerned is not the same as being worried. Worry speaks to anxiety while concerned—in this context—means to be interested or aware. We need to know the difference: one is going to paralyse you and rob you of your strength, while the other will give you a clear picture of what to pray about.

But if we are not to worry, then it must be because of who God is. 1 Peter 5:7 says to cast our worries on Him because He cares for us. Brother, sister, you don’t have to carry the burden of worry.

There are many other such examples in the Bible and the principle is always that worry is worse than not worrying. Put another way, either you can cast your worries on God, or you can carry your burdens—being those things you cannot control or resolve; those things that have not happened and may indeed never happen—around with you.

With the former, your focus is on God and with the latter, on things you probably can’t do much about.

### **Pray That the Church can Share the Gospel during Conflict**

Matthew 5:14-16, “*You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*”

The Gospel will always be shared, even if the penalty is imprisonment, punishment or even death. The church, and by “church,” I mean all true believers, are on a Godly mission in a broken world that needs Jesus.

When the darkness of world events, conflict, and persecution close in, the church needs to shine like a light. Philippians 2:15 reads, “*so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.*” Hope in God is different to the crooked and warped ways of the world, and it needs to show.

Pray that despite persecution, the Word of God will not be chained up (2 Timothy 2:9), i.e., taken captive even if Christians are arrested and/or martyred. Let's read 2 Timothy 2:9, "*for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.*"

You can imprison the messenger, but never the message. Preach the Word, despite...!

### **Pray That Believers Would Smile at the Future—Even in Devastation—Because of Who God Is**

Proverbs 31:25, "*She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.*"

This verse describes snow in Jerusalem, but the Proverbs 31 woman is not afraid. The mittens she made is not the source of her confidence, God is, and that is why she can smile at the future because she knows the God who holds the future.

Habakkuk is another great example. Habakkuk sees what is happening around him and prayerfully complains to God, not once, but twice. God, in 3:16-18, does respond and Habakkuk comes to terms with the reality that although Judah will lose, God can still be glorified.

Let us not forget that in celebrating the Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of our future expectation. In the Lord's Supper, we have the assurance that the Lord is one with us. At the same time, the congregation also looks forward to his return, and so we proclaim His death until He comes again. Through the Lord's Supper, we extend to the day when Jesus will appear in glory and bring all things to fullness.

### **Finally, Pray for Peace**

Psalm 122:6-8, "*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.' For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, 'Peace be within you.'*"

There are examples in the Bible of people praying for national peace and deliverance from war. Psalm 122 is a Psalm of ascent, for prayer on the journey from exile to Jerusalem. Those singing this Psalm would be from many nations, yet they all raised their voice to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, “*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*”

On this peace, Adam Clarke comments, “We thus pray for the government that the public peace may be preserved. Good rulers have power to do much good; we pray that their authority may be ever preserved and well directed.

Bad rulers have power to do much evil; we pray that they may be prevented from thus using their power.

So that, whether the rulers be good or bad, prayer for them is the positive duty of all Christians; and the answer to their prayers, in either case, will be the means of their being enabled to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

Let me recap, good leaders can do much good, bad leaders can do much evil. We need to pray for all leaders.

## **Conclusion**

We can speculate about 2 things:

1. What would a world look like where leaders honour God in all that they do?
2. What would a world look like where everyone was at Godly peace with God, each other, and themselves?

His peace though, is a present reality, despite the war, conflict, and difficulties we find ourselves in. John 16:33 reads, “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*” He already rules in the heart of His people. And what the heart is full of, should overflow.

The world in which believers presently find themselves and the peace of Christ are opposing realities. The work of the Lord continues, “despite.”

And this is why we make “*petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*”

Time is running out, and the work of the church is by no means yet done.

Jesus is coming again, Hallelujah.

Amen.

Read the article on which this message is based at: [https://thecripplegate.com/how-to-pray-for-the-church-in-wartime/?fbclid=IwAR3il9CJQSmmfA-IS5fmdMbw-GmIY6RF98gY1\\_mJG0BLuVRrzoDq-uxaiUg](https://thecripplegate.com/how-to-pray-for-the-church-in-wartime/?fbclid=IwAR3il9CJQSmmfA-IS5fmdMbw-GmIY6RF98gY1_mJG0BLuVRrzoDq-uxaiUg)