

A SERMON

ON

PRAYER FOR RULERS,

DELIVERED IN THE

Second Presbyterian Church in Chicago,

ON

SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 8, 1856,

BY

REV. R. W. PATTERSON,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

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CHICAGO:

PUBLISHED BY S. C. GRIGGS AND COMPANY.

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CHICAGO, JUNE 9, 1856.

REV. R. W. PATTERSON,

PASTOR OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH :

*Dear Sir:* We, the undersigned, members of your Church and Congregation, a portion of those who heard your discourse last Sabbath morning, from first TIM., 2: 1-4, respectfully request a copy of the same for publication.

JOHN C. WILLIAMS,  
J. H. DUNHAM,  
J. H. REED,

H. M. THOMPSON,  
JAMES PECK,  
F. D. GRAY,  
And forty-one others.

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CHICAGO, JUNE 10, 1856.

MESSRS. J. C. WILLIAMS, J. H. DUNHAM, J. H. REED,

H. M. THOMPSON, JAMES PECK, F. D. GRAY, AND OTHERS :

*Gentlemen:* Your note, requesting for publication a copy of my discourse delivered on last Sabbath morning, has been received. Were I to follow my own judgment in regard to the merits of the discourse, I should feel constrained to decline complying with your request. I feel bound, however, to respect your kindly judgment, and that of many other considerate friends, who have spoken to me touching this matter.

You are aware, Gentlemen, that I never meddle, in the pulpit, with party politics, as such. I have never had any private affiliation with political parties on any hand. Nor have I ever deemed it my duty to discuss, in the pulpit, the merits or demerits of any particular acts of public legislation. At the same time I have always held it to be the right and the duty of the pulpit to expound occasionally *those great principles of liberty and moral obligation* by which Christians ought ever to be guided in their relation to the public affairs of the country; and a political policy which denies this right and duty, seems to me eminently anti-Christian. It is not to be expected that a minister of Christ can be faithful at this point, without being at times accused of stepping out of his sphere, by a class of politicians who dread any fair application of Christian principles to their courses and acts. And it ought not to be a matter of surprise that a minister of the Gospel who pursues at once a prudent and yet a fearless course, should be deemed by one class of extreme men "behind the times," and by another class, dangerously "radical." It is worthy of note, that essentially the same exposition of principles which was in 1850 thought by some, too favorable to the Fugitive Slave Law, is now regarded by some in an opposite quarter, as savoring of sympathy with a rebellious and revolutionary spirit. "Whereunto shall we liken this generation?" "But wisdom is justified of her children." And all such facts enforce the great duty which I have recommended in my discourse—the duty of prayer for those who are in authority, and for all our citizens, especially in this season of excitement, when passion is hurrying so many of our people to bold extremes on either hand.

The discourse to which you refer was not prepared as the result of any expressed wish from any quarter, or under the influence of any special impulse of feeling. It expresses views and convictions which have rested in my mind, without material change, for many years. It is, Gentlemen, at your disposal, if you think its publication would tend to correct misapprehensions, or to guide Christians or other conscientious persons as to their duty in the present crisis of our public affairs.

With high regard, I am, Gentlemen,

Your obliged Friend and Pastor,

R. W. PATTERSON

# PRAYER

FOR

## THOSE IN POLITICAL AUTHORITY.

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1 TIMOTHY, 2: 1-4.

“ I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ;

For kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ;

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

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THE duty of prayer is one which is much insisted upon in the Holy Scriptures. The Apostle, in the words just read, exhorts that, *first of all*, as a *primary duty*, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made. And he would not have a part only of our fellow creatures chosen as the objects of our petitions at the throne of the Heavenly grace. He calls upon us as believers in the universal Supremacy and Providence of God, to remember in our intercessions *all* men, of every class, whether they be friends, enemies or strangers. And he names, as specially entitled to our sympathies and supplications, kings, and all that are in authority, or in stations of pre-eminence. Then, he assigns reasons for compliance with this precept, which are of the most weighty character. The passage might well be made the foundation of a discourse touching the great duty of prayer and thanksgiving in general ; but it calls our attention, in particular, to the importance of prayer for those of our fellow-men, to whose hands civil and political power is entrusted. And this special topic, always appropriate for our serious consideration, appears to press itself upon our thoughts and hearts with peculiar urgency at the present time.

Let me, therefore, invite your attention this morning, to the DUTY of prayer for rulers, and for all who possess political power, and to SOME REASONS for an earnest performance of this duty, especially in the present circumstances of our beloved country.

I. The Word of God habitually recognizes the rule of kings as proper to be regarded with reverence and submission in ages of the world when the monarchical form of government was almost everywhere established, and when the general condition of human society scarcely admitted of any freer and more desirable system of government. It is, of course, not to be inferred from this recognition of royal authority, that the *right of kings* is affirmed by a Divine sanction, as a right to be maintained in all the more advanced stages of social and civil progress in human history. The Bible does not meddle directly with existing forms of civil government. It authorizes civil rule *in some form* as an "ordinance of God," but leaves it to human prudence and to the orderings of Divine Providence, together with the silent working of *revealed principles* in the minds and hearts of men, to determine, from time to time, what particular form of government shall be established and sustained for the benefit of each Commonwealth or Nation. When, therefore, the Apostles exhort their readers to "be subject to the higher powers," to "honor the king," and to "pray for kings and for all that are in authority," they only point out the fit application, *in formerly existing circumstances*, of the *great principle*, that it is the duty of Christian people to respect, and commend to God in their supplications, the men who are providentially entrusted with the political rule and supremacy under which they live. These precepts are in principle and spirit, but not in a literal sense, applicable to us, under the republican form of government which God has providentially secured to us. We may respect and pray for kings, only as rulers remote from us, to whose hands are committed the public and civil interests of other nations. The *general principle* which has been defined as involved in the Scriptural precepts touching this subject, would require *us* to reverence, and remember before God, as our own rulers, those whom we ourselves, as a people, have placed in authority, and, with them, all the sovereign citizens, in whose hands the civil power ultimately resides. "The powers that be" and "are ordained of God," in our country, are the people, and those persons whom the people select to rule over them under the guidance of the Constitution and laws already established. We may, then, regard our text as enjoining upon us the frequent presentation of earnest petitions to the God of

Nations in behalf of all those in our land who possess and exercise civil authority in any form, but especially for those who are actually appointed to rule over us. This duty is already recognized, no doubt, with more or less distinctness, by every person among us who believes that God hears prayer. But it may be useful to notice a few points at which difficulty, or positive error, is liable to arise in some minds with respect to what is implied in the offering of prayer for those who possess civil authority. Let me then say,

1. That we are *not* required to pray for the sovereign people, or for our rulers, in any such form or manner as would imply a sanction of their mistakes or wicked doings. God's requirements are not in conflict with each other. His laws are supreme. No majorities among communities; no action of public legislators; no decisions of judicial courts; no decrees of supreme executives, can make that to be lawful and right which GOD ALMIGHTY has forbidden; or that to be wrong and unlawful which HE has required. "We ought," said the Apostles to the Jewish rulers, "to obey God, *rather* than man;"\* thus affirming the principle, that where we *must* either disobey God or men, we ought always to prefer allegiance to our Infinite Maker, and consent, if need be, to suffer the penalties of unrighteous human laws. And we read in the Word of God heavy condemnation against "the throne of iniquity which frameth mischief by a law," and against those men who "gather themselves together against the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood." Now, we know that God never contradicts himself. "He *cannot* deny himself." He does not, therefore, require us to pray for the success of either people or rulers in their efforts to carry out and establish false principles. He abhors wrong and injustice, and would spurn from his mercy seat any invocation of help for those who would so legislate, or so administer laws, as to make war upon the truth or upon the rights of men. It may even be our duty to pray that the wicked counsels of those who are in authority should be turned into foolishness, like the counsel of Ahithophel. "We can do nothing *against* the truth, but *for* the truth." And every petition we offer to the Most High should consist with a supreme concern for the ultimate triumph of our Redeemer's Kingdom of peace and righteousness, and for the triumph of true-Christian liberty throughout the earth. It is our duty to pray that our rulers, and all the people, may be restrained from wrong-doing, and not prospered in any selfish designs or mistaken

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\* Acts 5. 29. See also, Acts 4. 18-20. Daniel 3. 13-18.

devices. "The voice of the people is" *not* "the voice of God." For all men are fallible, and liable to be selfish and passionate, and wicked. Rulers are not infallible, but are often arbitrary, unjust and oppressive; and they can only be the objects of God's gracious benediction, so far as they acknowledge, in practice, the great law of impartial love, and the Supremacy of Him who sits on the Throne of Universal Dominion. It may, therefore, be our duty to pray *against* their policy and measures, while we pray *for* their persons and for the renovation of their characters. The early Christians prayed for their persecutors who were in power, but never for the success of their malignant designs.

2. Again: It is obvious, that the precept which we are considering, does not imply any obligation to submit passively to wrong and injustice on the part of our rulers, where legitimate modes of relief are available to the suffering subjects. We may not speak evil of rulers, *as such*. We may not *despise* their authority, even when it is wielded against the right. We may not, on christian principles, resist the powers which God has evidently ordained. Even Nero's rule, despotic as it was when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, was recognized by the Apostle as "an ordinance of God," which it was wrong for particular subjects to withstand by forcible means. But that crushing despotism was then established, and Divine Providence had, as yet, prepared no human agency by which it could be displaced, so as to make room for a better government. It was, therefore, the duty of all Christians to suffer quietly under its iron rigor, while they refused to obey its mandates, in any manner that involved disobedience to God. The case is widely different where the Providence of God raises the question whether the sceptre of dominion might not, and should not, be transferred to other and better hands. In such a case, as when our fathers threw off the British yoke, the question is, Who *are* the legitimate rulers? What *is* the power which God *now* ordains? And the right of revolution may thus be defended, whenever it is apparent, first, that the reigning power has been so abused as to be subversive of the chief ends of civil government; and, secondly, that Divine Providence has probably placed the establishment of a wiser and safer public administration within the reach of the wronged and suffering party. The case is still clearer where the ultimate power of correcting governmental abuses is lodged by the Constitution of the country in the hands of the people. In such circumstances the right of any who are subjected to lawless violence, to defend themselves, is unquestionable.



Equally clear, is the right to demand redress and protection at the hands of the government, when any portion of the citizens are oppressed and made the subjects of cruel and relentless atrocities, under pretense of executing enactments which have been made by no duly constituted authorities, but by the representatives of lawless mobs and wicked invaders. It may be the solemn duty of an unoffending people, who are pillaged and butchered under false color of law, to defend themselves at all hazards, and appeal for the justification of their course to God and to their fellow-countrymen, who love righteousness and hate iniquity.\* And it is surely the duty of every citizen to use all his civil prerogatives to *displace* rulers who identify themselves with the cause of oppression, and seek to sustain and extend it by forcibly crushing the lovers of freedom and humanity. The possession of a citizen's power under a representative government, involves the obligation to use that power in the support of men who will wisely exercise their authority against violence and despotism, and in favor of sobriety, the elevation and freedom of all men, and the restriction within the narrowest possible limits, of every evil that cannot be at once effectually cured. These principles will not be found, on the closest scrutiny, to conflict with any reasonable interpretation of those precepts of our Lord and his Apostles, which forbid any attempt to take vengeance, by private means,

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\* In a discourse from MATTHEW 22: 21, December 8, 1850, I made the following remarks: "But is there not, after all, a limit to the authority of human governments? There certainly is; and that limit is clearly defined in the Scriptures. 'We ought to obey God, rather than man.' That is, in case we must disobey one, let it be the creature rather than the Creator." "It is only when the unjust law is so framed as to *require us to violate* some plain, specific command of God, that we are warranted in disregarding it; and then we are to guard against treating with contempt the Government under which we live. The principle then, is this: Obey all *constitutional* laws, just or unjust, righteous or wicked, unless they *require you to violate* the undoubted statutes of Heaven. *There may be cases in which persons may be justified in disobeying enactments which are believed to be contrary to the Constitution under which they were made, for the purpose of testing the question whether they have been established by competent authority.* But, in such cases, the very question is, *Whether the enactments are really binding as civil laws, and not whether laws confessedly established by competent civil authority shall be trampled down.*"

In a discourse delivered March 30th, 1856, from MATTHEW 5: 5, on Meekness, I made the following remark: "It may be needful, at times, to practice self-defense. *It may be lawful, and a duty, for the friends of righteousness and liberty, to stand firmly by their fellows, if exasperated oppressors attempt to rob them of their rights by force.* But does it comport with "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," for ministers of the Gospel and professors of the religion of peace and good will, to make public and exciting demonstrations of their alacrity in providing weapons to be used in the deadly strife of brothers of the same blood with each other; and this, even in the sanctuaries of the land? Would not christian meekness mourn over a possible necessity for the shedding of blood, and dictate that any preparation for such a distressing emergency should be made in melancholy silence, and under a veil of sorrow?"

It will be seen how little ground there is for any charge of inconsistency in relation to the views which I have presented on different occasions, touching this subject.

upon those who may have injured us, *after* the mischief has been already done ; or with those other precepts which enjoin submission to *legitimate* public authority. And if so, it is not less manifest that the duty of *praying* for our rulers, in no wise implies that we may not properly use all legitimate means to avert the mischiefs which may be threatened by their wrong acts, or to overthrow their unrighteous policy. We are required to pray even for our enemies ; which surely does not forbid that we should endeavor to frustrate their malicious designs against us. We may pray for enemies and wicked rulers, with a sincere desire that God will do them good, and lead them into the right way ; while we do all that in us lies to disappoint their depraved counsels, and protect the sacred interests which may be in danger of suffering from their misdirected agency.

3. It is almost needless to remark, after what has been said, that the *shaping* of our petitions for those who possess civil authority, whether they be citizens or constituted rulers, must be determined by the particular features of the case as it stands before us. It is of course our duty to pray for the personal good of every man, whether he occupy one station or another in life. But besides this, it is our duty to pray for those who possess civil authority, with special reference to their official trusts and responsibilities. We may properly ask that their right measures may be prospered, and that their wrong policy may be frustrated and brought to nought in consistency with the best interests of all who are concerned. We ought to invoke for them "that wisdom which is profitable to direct," that all their future deliberations and actions may be guided to the best results for the honor of God and the welfare of the people. We ought to pray that their hearts may be purified from selfishness, and their minds delivered from pride, prejudice and passion ; that they may perceive their duty and be willing to perform it at any personal sacrifice. And can any thing be more manifest than the fitness of offering many supplications to that God who presides in all the affairs of men, that He may break the power of selfishness and party spirit in the minds of the people, and cause them to choose their rulers in the fear of the Lord, and with a wise regard to the interests of true liberty, and of intelligence and virtue in the land ? And who will not pray for the speedy adjustment of convulsing questions, and for the suppression of human wrath, when the fires of civil discord are fiercely burning, and when brothers of the same blood, and races of different colors, may easily be precipitated into a long and destructive conflict with each other, which could only end with the utter

*devastation and ruin* of the weaker section in our hitherto united and happy country?

Who will not pray that the sins of our rulers and of the people may be forgiven, and that the terrible judgments which we have as a nation invoked upon ourselves, may be turned away from us? Who will not pray that public repentance, and works meet for repentance, may soon become manifest from our National Capitol to all our remotest borders?

II. We are now brought to notice some reasons why it becomes us to pray for all who possess authority, whether as free citizens or as official rulers, and especially at the present time.

1. And the first consideration which I would suggest is an obvious one, but still one of fundamental importance. God teaches us to expect that He will hear and answer appropriate prayer for public, as well as for private interests. This is implied in the very fact that we are required to offer petitions for those who are in authority. The precept contained in our text in relation to this subject only follows the tenor of many precepts in the Old Testament, having the same general end in view. Thus the Psalmist exhorted all saints to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." And Jehovah counseled his people, by the prophet Jeremiah, to "seek the peace of the city whither they had been carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it." But why pray for such interests but because God has the hearts of kings, and of all men, in His hands, and turns them as the rivers of water, whithersoever He will? He may not see it wise to do all the particular things which we ask in relation to the public weal: but he is never sought *in vain*, by those who honor His supremacy and rightly trust in Him. This was well understood by Abraham, when he interceded for Sodom, and was heard, so far as the safety of Lot and his family were concerned. It was understood by Moses and Joshua, and by Samuel and David, by Hezekiah, Daniel and Nehemiah, when they so often and so availingly besought the Lord for the pardon and protection, or deliverance of Israel and Judah, and of the tribes in captivity, when they were in peril, or were actually crushed down under the calamities which their iniquities had brought upon them. We have still to do with the same God. And although we may not expect that He will save us from evils and give us peace and prosperity as a people by open miracle, we may reasonably hope and believe that He will, in the dispensations of His wonderful Providence, circumscribe and overrule the wickedness of men, and bring order out of confusion, when duly acknowledged and sought unto by those who truly fear Him. And who knows what glo-

rious changes He may speedily work in the political world, in answer to the humble prayers of His feeblest saints? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Ultimate success cannot crown the struggles of any party or class of men who "cast off fear and restrain prayer before God." The nation and people that will not acknowledge Him, must utterly perish. That cause which eschews the prayers of the godly, and enlists against it the sympathies of the Lord's most enlightened and devout servants, ought to fail, and must at last come to nought. Though hand join in hand, the ungodly and the wicked, who despise prayer, shall not go unpunished.

2. Let me remark further, that prayer for those who possess and exercise civil power, is specially adapted to fit us for our duties in times of trial and public conflict. When we commune only with our own hearts and with the minds of our fellow-creatures, we surely give place to feelings which have their origin in the depravity of our common nature. Left to ourselves, we cease to support even right principles from right motives; our passions gain the mastery over our conscience and our benevolence; and we forget to love the wrong-doer as a creature of God, and to think of him as an instrument of Providence, while we indulge a sinful indignation against his person, and against all who sympathize with him. We need to get away, often, from the human standpoint, and to come up into communion with Him who sitteth supreme above the water-floods, and who sees times, and laws, and governments change, in the continued repose of His own eternal serenity. It does us good to let our troubled spirits take refreshment and rest in the bosom of God, while we are commending to Him both rulers and people, and asking Him to stay public tumults, and to rebuke violence in high places, and low places; to ride on every whirlwind and direct every storm. It helps us to exercise forbearance and possess our souls in patience, and to take our steps with discretion, to feel that we are allying ourselves more and more with the Infinite One, whose counsels run from all eternity past into all eternity to come. It was this that enabled all the ancient worthies to be calm in times that tried men's souls, and to sustain with holy firmness the unchangeable principles for which they lived and died. Prayer to God ALMIGHTY for those who are in authority, reminds us that they are but men, and must die as soon as He shall breathe upon them; and that they, and we, and the whole nation, are in His hands, like clay in the hands of the potter. And this ought to fill us with solemn concern for all who bear responsibilities as God's instruments and agents, in positions involving

official trust. Habitual intercession with God for those who are in authority, prepares us to recognize with hearty thanksgiving, their good acts and wise measures, and to deplore their mistakes and public offenses more in grief than anger. The man who prays much for his rulers cannot be their personal enemy, however he may feel bound to expose their errors, or to withstand their unrighteous measures. And the meek spirit which true prayer begets and cultivates, always tends to turn away wrath, even in those who are accustomed to make passion and caprice their supreme lawgiver in seasons of excitement and conflict. So long as we sincerely pray for any class of men, we must desire their highest welfare, and be ready to requite even their hatred with love. And O, what a healing power is there in Christian love, when the hearts of men are sore and bleeding from the effects of fierce collision with each other! The praying spirit in a community, or nation, thus tends to promote general good-will, and to calm the political waters when they have been lashed into fury by tempests of popular passion. And this spirit always saves Christians from such hasty excesses in their own words and actions as would needlessly involve them in public strife, and cause the name of God and his doctrine to be blasphemed. Prayer for rulers, is, then, well fitted from its own natural influence, to bring about the result which the Apostle indicates, "that we may lead a *quiet and peaceable* life, in all godliness and honesty." And if there were more of prayer, and less of exasperated denunciation, in relation to those who represent influential parties on all sides, and those who are in authority in particular, would there not be more of sober regard for the interests of the whole people, and less of passion and selfish ambition in all our public councils?

3. Think, in the next place, of the preciousness of the interests that are at stake in the wise, or unwise, administration of our public affairs.

Never before was there a nation with such an ancestry, and such an early history; with such a social and political life, and such a progressive development, as those which distinguish and make proud the people of this great confederacy. What a treasure of national memories have we, to quicken the pulsations of our hearts on every glance at *the past!* What an inheritance of constitutional liberty and unfettered religion have our fathers left us, as the fruit of their sacrifices and blood! *What a present* of actually achieved greatness and power, and of advancing prosperity, and self-development, do we live in! *What a future* of enlargement and glory seems to have been almost ensured to

us! Here we behold a theater for more people than now inhabit the globe. Here that great experiment of self-government is in progress, on the success or failure of which the faith of the thinking world in free institutions is to turn for generations to come. Let this experiment prove the wisdom of our fathers, and the practicability of perpetuating and fortifying a Christian Republic, and the millions of earth's enslaved people may lift up their heads and hail their approaching redemption. Let this experiment end in bloody disaster and a strong despotism, and the hopes of freedom will wither and perish on the day of our terrible fall. Here is planted the purest and most efficacious Christianity that blesses man in any country of the world. Here religion is for the first time in the history of our race, truly free; and here for the first time, the missionary spirit of the Gospel has found unobstructed development. Let these political and educational and religious institutions stand, and do their legitimate work through only a few coming generations, and what a power will be here concentrated and brought to a resistless bearing for those glorious achievements which are set before us in the sublime pictures of the ancient prophets! But what if ignorance, and political corruption, and the spirit of oppression, shall break up the foundations of all these noble institutions, and cause the people of the Lord to sit down in despondency by the rivers of Babylon, and hang their harps upon the willows! Where then will be the hopes of all the future millions of this land, for time and eternity? Where will be the promise of the world's speedy jubilee, under the universal reign of our glorious Christianity? God alone can save all these precious interests from calamitous injury or utter ruin. And if he shall leave the rulers and the people of this nation to their own passions, how soon will all that is fair and of good report among us, be consumed by the torch of civil war and reduced to ruin by the deadly grapple of brother with brother, and of master and slave with each other? Will not every one who knows how to estimate the treasures which God has entrusted to this nation, pray for those who are in authority? pray for the peace of Jerusalem? Is not this "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved," civilly and spiritually, "and to come unto the knowledge of the truth?"

4. Let it not be said, that our interests as a people are not in special peril. Let it not be said, that the bonds which cement us together are too strong to be sundered; or that God will not forsake us after having done so much for us. We *are* environed by peculiar perils. The history of the world proves to us that general ignorance and corrup-

tion among the people are fearful causes of deterioration and decay in any nation,—that luxury and intemperance beget weakness,—that pride and self-sufficiency presage disaster,—and that expansion of territory and the consequent rapid multiplication of diverse interests, are liable to cause great commonwealths to fall by their own weight. And the Word of God assures us that the nation and people that will not serve Jehovah SHALL PERISH—so that *ungodliness* may be set down as a sure cause of destruction to any persistently wicked nation. Now we know that all these causes are in a great measure present and at work, affecting rulers and people, in our beloved country. How much do we see in the wide-spread ignorance and vice of all our cities and rural districts to alarm us, when we remember that such multitudes of those who exercise the sovereignty of citizens are perpetually liable to be deceived by corrupt and wily politicians, or willing to sell their votes at any time for the means of gratifying their diseased and debasing appetites? Who can suppress anxiety in looking towards our civil future, when he calls to mind the hundreds of thousands among those that govern us, who will inevitably use the elective franchise in favor of whatever party will give the freest indulgence to their vices, or lay the slightest restraints upon their livelihoods, which consist in the vending of intoxicating poisons, or in the sale of virtue itself, for the destruction of the tempted? Then what effeminacy is luxury already producing among many of our people! What poverty and degradation is intemperance multiplying! What national pride and ambition have we been displaying! What eagerness for the acquisition of new territory by just or unjust means, have we as a people evinced! And what a range of diverse interests have we swept into the one vast circle of our public and political domain! What millions of ungodly people have we in the midst of us, who daily profane Jehovah's name, trample upon His Sabbaths, and neglect or even despise His sanctuaries! How many of our rulers are "haters of God!" and how few of them humbly acknowledge His supremacy! Were this the whole of the case we should have reason to tremble for our country. For God is just, and He punishes nations for their sins in this world, where alone their national existence is maintained. He has indeed exalted us and prospered us greatly thus far; but He will cast us off, if we cast Him off: and He may yet choose to make us an example of the height from which a great nation may be cast down, for their sins, into the gulf of remediless ruin. He will surely make us such an example, unless our progressive ambition and wickedness shall be restrained.

But the whole of our case has not yet been suggested. There are *peculiar* causes of danger at work in the midst of us, that may at any moment combine, nay, which have even now combined, with the more ordinary causes of peril which have already been noticed. We have in this nation more than two millions of people whose religious ideas and usages are essentially in unison with civil and spiritual despotism, and most of whom may be rallied, at a word, for the support of any party that will further the interests of the great overshadowing hierarchy at home and abroad, to which they all acknowledge allegiance. Then, we have, in about one half of our States and Territories, the strange anomaly of Republicanism and Despotism in its worst form, closely combined in one system, involving discordant principles, discordant provisions, and mutually jealous and hostile subjects of government. At the same time we have another half, and much the strongest half, of the same General Confederacy, composed of States and Territories whose local governments are purely Republican, and whose people, except so far as they are deceived, or blinded by the interests of political parties, are in their hearts, and souls, and most religious convictions, lovers of liberty and haters of slavery in all its forms. Now, these opposing sectional interests and conflicting principles, can no more be permanently reconciled or harmoniously combined under the same General Government, than the Despotism of Russia and the Freedom of our own Republic can be united under the same political Headship. The progress of economical, and social, and moral causes, must bring them more and more into collision with each other. The startling violence which we witness at our national Capitol and on the plains of a western Territory, are merely exponents of a deeper conflict of *mutually hostile principles*, which no compromise can set at one, and no human skill can so unite under one system as to prevent political convulsions and earthquakes. Nor can our Union ever be peacefully dissolved. Sooner or later, one of three results must occur in this land, whatever may be the cost of treasure or blood involved in the process. The principles of freedom must conquer and subjugate those which uphold despotism; or the principles of despotism must triumph and become absolutely dominant, in form as well as fact, in all our political institutions; or else we must be broken into fragments as a nation by civil discord, and, perhaps, in the end become the slaves of some foreign power. No man who has the least moral or political philosophy to guide him, can well shut his eyes to the stern fact that these solemn alternatives are actually set before us at the present moment.



Now, the question is, who but God can so preside in this conflict of opposing interests and principles, as to save us from the horrors of internecine war, and establish our civil and religious freedom on a basis that can never be shaken? Who but God can give us all the wisdom and forbearance, combined with due moral decision, which we need in this critical process? Who but God can save us from hasty and destructive adventures on either side, in our sectional strifes, and open the eyes of the blind ere it be too late to retrace their downward steps? Who but God can give to the Church the needful moderation, as the great conservator of peace and of true boldness in times of peril?

There is hope in prayer. God can show us how to dispose peacefully of present issues, and how to inaugurate a policy that shall in the end take away from our nation all our chief occasions of fear, and make every bondman civilly and spiritually free. Let us, therefore, seek His face. Let us plead with Him for all our rulers and for all the people. Let us look to Him for those interpositions by which the foundations of our glorious Union may be established on the basis of true and changeless principles, and its arches be made as firm as the vault of heaven. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

"I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority: that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."





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