

How do I pray for my country?

Adapted from my original article written in Zimbabwe on 26 May 2002 during the farm invasions in that country



I know that many have become confused as to how to pray, and I understand the reason for the confusion. I think it is important that we pray accurately - it gives us direction and hope, and it gets things accomplished. After all, when we pray, should we not pray with faith - believing that what we pray for will be answered?

I therefore think that we as Christians should be more focussed and single minded and united in what we pray for. I therefore wish to share with you the things I pray for, in the hope that it will be of help to some of you.

Assisted in our prayers

Firstly, as a brief introduction, I believe that we are assisted in our prayers. We find out about this again from the Old Testament temple rituals. The *golden altar of incense* represented the prayers of the nation going up as fragrant incense before the Lord. *Twice per day* this incense was to be burned, its smoke going up as a *memorial* to the Lord.

There are many references to this, but I mention here just two. The altar of incense was completely covered in gold,

indicating holiness (Hebrews 9:4). However, the altar of incense itself had been made with two rings for the poles to go through to *support* it (Exodus 30:4). These two *supports* have a deeply spiritual significance and is referred to in the New Testament. In other words, we are assisted in our prayers from two sides.

Firstly

Rom 8:26 "For in the same way the Spirit helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

I believe this is "*praying in the spirit*" (1Corinthians 14:14,15) or praying in tongues. There are several references to this in both Old and New Testaments. I discuss this more deeply in my book series, *Receive the Holy Spirit*. The first three books in this series are available on my website: <https://www.henryjackson.online/product-page/gateway-to-the-kingdom-book-1>

The Holy Spirit residing in us, uses our own tongues to pray for us according to the will of the Father. This is a wonderful *support* to our prayers as we know that even when we feel totally weak, we can pray "*according to the will of God*".

The second support is explained a few verses later.

*Rom 8:34, "... Christ Jesus is He Who died, yes, rather Who was raised, Who is at the right hand of God, who also **intercedes for us.**"*

I see then that our prayers are directed to the Father, YHWH, and on either side of us the other two Persons of the Trinity, Jesus our Great High Priest, and the Holy Spirit are there supporting us in our prayers. That is very encouraging at a time when we might be feeling that our prayers are not being heard.

To add to this, I see something interesting in the following two Scriptures:

Rev 5:8 "And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

Rev 8:3 "And another angel came and stood at the altar, (the true altar of incense from which Moses made a copy for the tabernacle in the wilderness) holding a golden sensor; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

8:4 "And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth;

and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and a great earthquake.”

In both these Scriptures, we see that the prayers of the saints went up to God the Father just like incense, *directly to the throne room*. I see also that *much incense was added to it* - obviously from the prayer support on either side of us from Jesus, our Great High Priest (*“Who ever liveth to make intercession for us”* - Hebrews 7:25) and from the Spirit (Who prays for us - through us - according to the will of God. Romans 8:26,27).

However, then I see the action resulting from those prayers - the **censer being filled with fire and thrown towards the earth**. Obviously, that is the judgement of God, bringing justice on behalf of the saints, **as a direct result of their prayers**. How do I know that the saints were praying for justice to be done? Well, the Scripture tells me just that:

Rev 6:9 “... I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

6:10 “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”

So, it was quite OK for the saints to pray for justice. In the early church situation, under an evil, corrupt Roman government, the saints experienced much the same as we are experiencing today in Zimbabwe. I believe that it is important for us to pray according to the Scriptures.

As our High Priest, Jesus, is interceding for us. We understand that He is described as the *“Word of God”* (John 1:1,14). When we pray the Word, then our prayers receive the support of our High Priest as He IS the Word. In considering this, then, I find that I gain specific direction for my prayers for our countries of Zimbabwe and South Africa – and any other country. There should be no confusion. As I was sharing these thoughts with an elderly pastor this morning, he pointed out the following Scripture to me:

1Cor 14:8 “If the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?”

As this Scripture is in the context of *prayer in the Spirit*, I believe it is time for the Christian leaders to give **clear direction for prayer**, so that we as a nation can be specific and direct in our prayers. Following is then such a bugle call. I pray that this call for prayer will be distinct, direct, and solidly based on the principles of Scripture.

So then, how do I pray?

Let me break it down to various categories:

For the government and its leaders:

A Scripture that is often quoted is:

1Tim 2:1 “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,

- 2:2 *“For kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.*
- 2:3 *“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour,*
- 2:4 *“Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

As a result of this Scripture, I have often heard people pray the seemingly spiritual prayer, *“Lord bless Mugabe and the members of his cabinet.”*

I personally struggle with that - maybe I am not such a spiritual person. However, I do not see anywhere in the above Scripture that we should pray for the blessing of men who are devoted to evil and the destruction of a nation. In the above Scripture, we are told that we should pray - and it specifically says that entreaties (urgent requests) should be made *“on behalf of all men”*. I understand by this that our requests - prayers - should be for the accomplishment of a specific purpose which will be *for the benefit of all men* in bringing peace, or bringing people to salvation, or for the breaking down of arrogant hearts.

If a person says, *“I pray for such and such a person,”* the person is merely describing an action they are taking. The question could come back from heaven, *“Ok, you’re praying, but what are you actually asking for?”* Prayer is supposed to be a petition to God for something specific. *“Please would you give me guidance in a decision I have to make.”* - That is a prayer - because it is a specific request.

Thus, when the above Scripture in Timothy instructs us to pray, it is not in this passage giving us much guidance as to what to ask for - it is merely informing us that we should be praying for our government. The result of our prayers should be the *benefit of the nation* as a whole - especially as far as spiritual revival is concerned, as he says,

1Tim 2:4 "... who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Therefore, if we desire to know exactly HOW we should be praying for our government – i.e., what specific requests we are to make, we should look elsewhere in the Scriptures for guidance. So, let's look at such Scriptures:

In the Psalms we find specific prayers laid out for us in keeping with our present situation, and we see again and again how the Psalmist prayed for the *destruction of the wicked*. Here is a Psalm that I have used often over the years, when I have found the wicked assailing me, and my prayers based upon this Scripture have been wonderfully answered:

Psa 35:1 "Contend O YHWH with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me.

35:2 "Take hold of buckler and shield and rise up for my help.

35:3 "Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; say to my soul, 'I am your salvation.'

35:4 "Let those be ashamed and dishonoured who seek my life; let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me.

- 35:5 *“Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of YHWH driving them on.*
- 35:6 *“Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of YHWH pursuing them.*
- 35:7 *“For without cause, they hid their net for me; without cause, they dug a pit for my soul.*
- 35:8 *“Let destruction come upon him unawares; and let the net which he hid for me catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall.*
- 35:9 *“And my soul shall rejoice in YHWH: It shall exalt in His salvation.*
- 35:10 *“All my bones will say, ‘YHWH, who is like You, Who delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him, and the afflicted and needy from him who robs him ...’”*

Now that is a very direct prayer - there is no mistaking what the Psalmist is asking for, and in studying the life of king David, it is obvious that God answered his prayers in exactly the way he had prayed above. If you might think this to be harsh and unspiritual, then consider that David was referred to as a *“man after God’s heart”*!

The warnings against wickedness - especially of evil rulers - are so many that I could not possibly quote them all here in this article. In general, the Scripture warns the wicked that their own wickedness will cause them to fall. Prayers recorded in Scripture are then directed in keeping with this general principle, which is:

“Lord, You said that You will cause the wicked to stumble and fall, You said that You would confuse their plans. Now according to Your Word, I ask You to cause a great confusion to come in the ranks of the leaders of wickedness, such that all their plans would come to nothing and be destroyed. I pray that, just as You removed Pharaoh, You remove the rulers in Zimbabwe who are committed to practising wickedness, and in their place put men who fear You, and who will respond to, and act upon Your Word.”

Yes, I actually pray,

“Lord, please remove Mugabe and his entire Zanu PF gang of thugs. Confuse their plans and destroy them in their own wickedness.”

Some might say, “But he is your president - how can you oppose him?” My answer is again from the Scripture,

*Prov 28:17 “A man who is laden with the guilt of human blood will be a fugitive until death; **let no one support him.**”*

Mugabe has, for his own selfish gain and power, deliberately chosen a course of hatred and bitterness, and he is personally responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people. I cannot support him or pray for his blessing. Rather I pray for his downfall to come quickly so that our nation can be delivered from his evil schemes. There are many other world leaders who are guilty of the same abuse of power.

The Scripture says,

Prov 29:1 "A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy."

I do not hate him - I will not allow myself to be sucked into his cesspool of hatred. Yet I stand firmly for righteousness - and judge according to righteous judgement, as the Scripture tells us to do.

A judge would not be said to be filled with hatred if he condemns a murderer. It is not because of hatred that he makes a judgement, it is rather for the establishment of righteousness and justice that he acts, and he is simply carrying out his duty - that of judging with righteous judgement. In the same way, we as God's people should be able to judge matters of this life and pray in accordance with that righteous judgement.

I pray specifically that God would destroy the evil schemes of the wicked, and that God would raise a godly government who will discipline the wicked and fulfil their God-given duty to do justice. Justice is important for the stability and prosperity of a nation, and we should pray for justice to prevail in this madness that we are experiencing in Zimbabwe (and in other countries all over the world). The Scripture says,

*Prov 29:4 "The king gives **stability to the land by justice**, but a man who takes bribes overthrows it."*

Prov 24:24 "He who says to the wicked, 'You are righteous,' peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him;

*24:25 "But to those who **rebuke the wicked** will be delight, and a good blessing will come upon them."*

20:26 *“A wise king winnows the wicked, and drives a threshing wheel over them.”*

This thought leads me to a serious issue in praying for our country:

War?

I think it would be obvious to all who follow the events of our nation, that it would not take much to trigger a civil war. *By all means we should pray against that!* War creates deep-rooted bitterness and hatred, and the needless spilling of much blood. Our nation is being plunged headlong into deep poverty and starvation. Masses of people have been evicted from their homes as farmers and their many employees have been turned out. The severe shortage of maize meal, among other shortages of the population’s staple diet, is already causing the starvation of countless thousands of people, and the gross inefficiencies of the government to correct this situation, together with bribery and corruption at every level, means that the population is fast moving towards a catastrophe of massive proportions. *History has shown that these are ingredients for civil war.*

The situation is extremely serious, and it is our duty as Christians to avert war by means of prayer. What form should those prayers take? I believe that is simple and straightforward. We must pray that our present government is removed from power as soon as possible. We cannot afford to dilly-dally with soft, so-called spiritual prayers anymore. *We must pray directly and earnestly, and in unity.*

For our white farmers

These brave people have stood up to the most horrific abuse and hatred from the ruling party. I am reminded of the Scripture:

Psa 69:1 "Save me O God, for the waters have threatened my life.

69:2 "I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me.

69:3 "I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God.

69:4 "Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; those who would destroy me are powerful, what I did not steal, I then have to restore."

In answer to the cry of his heart, the Psalmist himself offers a prayer which we can use as a model in praying for our farmers:

Ps 69:13 "But as for me, my prayer is to Thee, O YHWH, at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, answer me with Thy saving truth.

69:14 "Deliver me from the mire, and do not let me sink; may I be delivered from my foes, and from the deep waters.

69:15 "May the flood of water not overflow me, and may the deep not swallow me up, and may the pit not shut its mouth on me."

I am praying that God will supernaturally intervene for the farmers, and that whatever has been forcefully stolen from them will be restored, with more besides.

When my wife and I were mugged, and so much of our property violently stolen from us, we prayed in this way, and miraculously, God caused the thieves to be caught. Justice prevailed, and most of our things were restored - or replaced with much better than we had before. God can do that for you farmers, and that is my prayer for you. However, I pray for more than just that:

I also see from the Scriptures that the white people in Southern Africa have not come here by accident - rather we came here by divine appointment of God. I understand that we are descended from the ancient people of Israel, and that God's original purpose for Israel, and His promise to Abraham, still stands - that we should be a blessing to the nations of the earth (Genesis 12:3). We are called to be a *servant nation*, serving the other nations of the world, as the next Scripture confirms.

Isaiah speaks prophetically to the nation of Israel, and he says,

*Isa 41:8 "But you, Israel, **My servant**, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend,*

*41:9 "You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts, and said to you, **You are my servant**, I have chosen you and not rejected you.*

41:10 *“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”*

Later, Isaiah prophesies to these same people and says,

Isa 54:15 *“If anyone assails you it will not be from Me. Whoever assails you will fall because of you ...”*

54:17 *“No weapon formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgement you will condemn. This is the heritage of the **servants** of YHWH, and their vindication is from Me,’ declares YHWH.”*

Throughout the ages, God’s servant nation, has had enemies who have sought their destruction, and yet again and again, God has miraculously delivered us from our enemies. It would be easy for us to rise in pride and claim superiority because of God’s blessing upon us as a nation. However, this is the very thing that has brought about our own destruction again and again. *Pride (arrogance) is our biggest enemy.*

Zephaniah specifically prophesies about us in Southern Africa,

Zeph 3:11 *“... I will **remove** from your midst **your proud exalting ones**, and you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain.”*

I sense God is doing exactly that at this time - removing our pride. That is hard, but necessary.

I see then that God is concerned with our attitude and will use affliction to deal with that attitude if necessary. Therefore, my prayer for the farmers (and the whites in our country), is that God would soften our hearts and bring us back to Him and quickly remove our arrogant pride. I pray that we would turn to Him in our distress as our forefathers did, and that we would serve Him in sincerity and truth.

Hosea 2:6,7 says of Israel,

Hos 2:6 "Therefore behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths,

6:7 "and she will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them, and she will seek them, but will not find them. The she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me than than now!'"

This passage refers to the destruction of Israel and her banishment away from God (her Husband), and how God would cause things to be difficult for her with the express purpose of causing her to turn back to Himself. Later in Hosea He says,

Hos 5:15 "... In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."

How often God has used affliction to turn Israel back to Himself?

I pray then for a revival among the farmers, a humbling of our hearts, a genuine repentance before our God for our own sins and pride. I pray this because I believe that revival among the white people in our country provides a major key in the

unfolding of God's purposes for Southern Africa - including the salvation and sustenance of many millions of black people in our continent.

That brings me then to the final part of my prayer:

The black people of Zimbabwe (Africa).

What a very special people's group this is! The outside world has only really seen this nation through the eyes of corrupt individuals in our government. That is a false picture. We who have lived among and worked shoulder to shoulder with the black people know them to be a humble people with amazing strengths and talents.

I know that many have also been frustrated in working with them, but when we study the reason for our frustrations, I see, sadly, that the blacks have generally been brought low and destroyed through their *bondage to witchcraft* - under which the vast majority suffers.

However, the blacks are quick to respond to the gospel - much quicker than us whites - and the following Scripture comes to mind:

Psa 68:31 "... Ethiopia (the Hebrew name is Cush, meaning black) will quickly stretch out her hands to God."

I believe that our (white descendants of Israel) mission here is to be a blessing to these special people. To employ them, to lift them up till they can stand steadily upon their own feet. Many wonderful black Christian men and women have risen to heights never dreamed of 100 years ago, and taken their

place among us as Christian businessmen and women, leaders in their own right. In that, our mission is accomplished.

It is my prayer that this black nation will throw off the shackles of witchcraft and ancestral worship and will rise in a newfound authority in Christ. I pray that they will become that which God had made them to be, taking their own place of excellence - grafted into God's olive tree of nations.

That is why my grandparents came to Zimbabwe as missionaries, and why I am staying in Zimbabwe (and now South Africa). I pray that the restoration of farms will result in hundreds of mini mission stations established throughout the land - centres for the spreading of the gospel, and the efficient production of food for this and the surrounding nations. I pray that we might not only be the breadbasket of Southern Africa, but that, as bread represents life, we might be a springboard for the gospel of life for Africa and the world at large.

Imagine what can be done with hundreds of these mini mission stations - and the practical training of tens of thousands of Christian workers set free from the shackles of witchcraft. Oh Lord, may it come quickly!

Mat 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."

If our farms are restored, businesses blessed and new godly government put in place, will we use our newfound peace and prosperity for the extension of the gospel, or will we quickly forget and go back to our old ways? That, each person must answer individually to God.

Josh 24:15 "... As for me and my house, we will serve YHWH."

I close this article with an old song we used to sing:

Keep me true, Lord Jesus

Keep me true

Keep me true, Lord Jesus

Keep me true

There's a race that I must run

There are victories to be won

Give me power every hour

To be true

May God help you and direct you as you pray for our beloved nation and its people, and may our prayers, like the arrows of an expert archer, fly true to its mark.

With much love to you all,

Henry D Jackson