

Pray to God Who Desires to Save

That All May Know the Truth

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:5-7

Sermon Series: *Timothy's Charge*

Topic: Prayer, Salvation

Introduction

Overview

As we have been making our way through this letter, we have seen that the apostle Paul has urged Timothy to remain in the city of Ephesus and put right some things that are wrong. In every church there things that are going well and things that need to be put in order. It is the responsibility of the church leaders to make right whatever is wrong. In the church in Ephesus, there were those among the teachers who were teaching false doctrine and misplacing their devotion. Paul charged Timothy to deal with these problems with a heart of love that flowed from a good conscience and a sincere faith (1:5).

At the beginning of chapter 2, we saw that now Paul urges the whole church to prioritize prayer. All kinds of prayers should be made for all kinds of people. Prayers should be offered for kings and all in high positions of government, so that society will be peaceful and the church will be fruitful.

Prayer is pleasing to God and it is the foundation for salvation of all people. Prayer is of first importance in the corporate life of the church for it is the first step in saving the lost. Through prayer and the subsequent Spirit-led proclamation of the gospel, people are and will be saved. So Paul in this paragraph is aiming to encourage the church to **pray to God who desires to save** and to bring all people to "the knowledge of the truth."



Thus, what truth does one need to know about God? What truth does one need to know about Jesus in order to be saved? What truth does one need to know about one's self to be saved? What message must be heard and believed in order for the lost to be saved?

Review

The apostle Paul made a claim about prayer, which sets us up to consider these truths.

³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)

Prayer is *good* and *pleasing* to God. He delights when his children come to him in prayer. We should be energized and motivated toward more deliberate seasons of prayer because God's enjoys such communion with his children. Last week we saw that *prayer is direct and deliberate dialogue with God the Father in the name of Christ Jesus the Son.*

The key thought and phrase which leads Paul into this next paragraph is the phrase, "*God our Savior.*"

- Who is this God who is our Savior?
- What is he like?
- How has he worked salvation?
- What has he done to provide salvation?
- And who can receive this salvation?
- What does this mean that he desires all people to be saved?

The word '*all*' is thematic in this section. We've seen this word about five times.

1. v.1 *all* kinds of prayers
2. v.1 "made for *all* of people"
3. v.2 "*all* in high positions")
4. v.4 "desires *all* people to be saved..."
5. v.6 "a ransom for *all*"

Main Idea: God Desires Salvation and Truth for All

Paul highlights two facts about *God our Savior* in this sentence (v.3-4). There are two things God desires. He desires all people; **1**) to be saved and **2**) to come to the knowledge of the truth. He not only desires all to be saved, but he also desires all to know truth. The word

ἐπίγνωσις, "knowledge," denotes more than knowing something. It is "active apprehension, not mere acquiring of information." It is "not as much intellectual comprehension as it is discernment and appropriation by faith."¹

¹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 86.

Salvation comes through knowing and receiving the truth. There are four facts that Paul now explains.

- 1) There is one God of all
- 2) There is one mediator for all
- 3) There is one ransom for all
- 4) There is one testimony (or message) for all

1) One God of All (v.5)

Paul begins with God. There is *one God of all*.

⁵ For there is one God...
1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV)

This is the first truth that Israel learned. This is essentially the first commandment. There is only one God and he alone brought them out of Egypt. God demonstrated that he alone is God by proving himself more powerful than all the Egyptian so-called "gods." Therefore, after bringing them safely out of slavery and delivering them to freedom, God said to them, "*You shall have no other god's before me.*"² Since there truly is only one God, it would therefore be false of him to allow us to think that we could worship as God something or someone that truly is not God at all. Thus, this command is very loving. And so all of Israel were commanded to teach their children,

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV)

There is only one God. He is worthy of all our love. We must love him and we must teach our children to love him. This truth is proclaimed throughout the whole Bible.³

⁶ Thus says the LORD, ...of hosts:
"I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
Isaiah 44:6 (ESV)

⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."
Revelation 1:8 (ESV)

² Exodus 20:3.

³ See also Isaiah 45:5-6.

The truth is that there is only one God. There is only one supreme, unlimited, eternal God. There are many religions that claim many gods. But the truth is that there is only one God who lives and reigns forever. Therefore, direct your prayer to Him. If you want your prayers to be answered, then pray to the only one who can answer. There is *only one God of all*.

2. One Mediator for All (v.5)

There is only one *mediator* for all.

⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus... 1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV)

"Men" (ἄνθρωπος) here translates *anthrōpos*, which can be translated as 'mankind' or 'people.'

This word frames this whole section.⁴

1. v.1 prayers for "all people"
2. v.4 "desires all people to be saved"
3. v.5 "mediator between God and men"
4. v.6 "as ransom for all people"

A '*mediator*' is one who brings about reconciliation between two alienated parties.⁵ Mankind was and remains alienated and cut off from God when Adam and Eve sinned by rebelling against God's command in the Garden of Eden. When they sinned God promised to one day send a son of woman⁶ into the world to redeem that broken relationship. When the time was right, God sent Jesus into the world as baby, born of a virgin. This is why the messiah had to be a man. This is why Paul makes of point of saying "the man Christ Jesus."

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV)

Jesus destroyed death because he is the only person who having died, has been resurrected on the third day, never to die again. Jesus could not stay dead because during his life he never sinned. Thus, death could not hold him. After having made atonement for sin, he rose from the dead and presented himself alive to all the apostles. Thus, because of this, they very badly concluded and confidently proclaimed,

⁴ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 154.

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 502.

⁶ See Galatians 4:4-5 (ESV) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:12 (ESV)

Jesus alone is the one mediator between God and men. He alone offered himself as an atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. There is no way for a person to have his or her sins atoned for other than through Christ, thus the only way to enjoy communion with God the Father is through Christ Jesus the Son.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6 (ESV)

3. One Ransom for All (v.6)

When God chose to save the sinners, he chose to do so by only one means, a *ransom for all*.

⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.
1 Timothy 2:6 (ESV)

Gave himself. That Jesus “*gave himself*” reveals the truth that Jesus chose to die. He did so of his own volition. Jesus was not the hapless victim of some secret conspiracy. He was a willing participant in divine plan. Jesus very clearly told his disciples,

¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” John 10:17-18

No one took Jesus’ life. He gave his life. He laid it down. Jesus chose to die. He even decided the moment of his death.

“It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

John 19:30

The phrase “*gave up*” translates one Greek word (*παράδιδωμι paradidōmi*) which means “to hand over; to surrender.” This means that Jesus voluntarily chose to die. Jesus was sovereign even over the moment of his death. Jesus did not die ultimately of suffocation or bloodless. Ultimately, he died because he chose to die. He gave up his life. He yielded his body and his spirit to death, because it was the will of the Father. It was the will of God our Savior.

As a ransom for all. The word '*ransom*' (ἀντίλυτρον *antilytron*) means that which secures "redemption, deliverance, or release."⁷ "In the first century the simple word *lytron* was used for the ransom price paid to free a slave. So Christ paid the ransom to free us from the slavery of sin. Because of this we are rightfully his possession."⁸ Jesus died on behalf of sinners. He effected an exchange. He suffered the penalty of sin, which is death, so that those who trust in him would receive the gift of life.

Did Jesus actually pay the price for all people? It says he "*gave himself as a ransom of all.*" Does *all* here mean every literal person? Some see here the teaching of universalism, which teaches that in the end all people will be saved. Is Paul teaching that literally all people will ultimately be saved by Jesus? The answer is no for several reasons. The first reason is that such a teaching was not taught by the apostles.

...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28 (ESV)

Here we see that ransom Jesus paid was "*for many,*" not every literal human being. Second, Paul himself later in the letter warns against falling into sin and the coming judgment (1 Tim 5:24). Third, Jesus himself explains in Matthew 24 that just as there is eternal life for the righteous so there is eternal punishment for the wicked (24:41, 46). Finally, the book of Revelation clearly pictures hell as a place of eternal punishment for those who disobey the word of God and refuse to repent of their sin (Rev 14:10-11; 19:3, 20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8).

What Paul means by saying that Jesus "*gave himself as a ransom for all*" is that Jesus did not die for the Jews alone, but rather also died for Gentiles. Gentiles are included in God's plan of salvation, which is what he speaks about in the next verse.

4. One Testimony for All (v.6b-7)

The focus of the final truth is the centrality of *one testimony for all* as a means of appropriating and applying salvation.

⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 1 Timothy 2:6-7 (ESV)

Paul was appointed as a *preacher* (a herald, public proclaimer) and *apostle* (one sent by Jesus) and *teacher* (instructor, explains, expounds) in order to communicate the gospel to the Gentiles.⁹ That is the truth that Paul is explaining and not lying about. God has included

⁷ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 155.

⁸ Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 358.

⁹ Romans 1:5; 11:13; Galatians 1:16; 2:7.

Gentiles in his plan for salvation.¹⁰ Gentiles are included among those for whom Christ died. Salvation is from the Jews, but for Gentiles, that is, salvation is for all!

This is the testimony and message which needed to be proclaimed. This is the message that the whole world needs to know. This is the truth that needs to be received and believed. This truth needed to be taught because for so long it had been hidden. The Jews taught that salvation was only for Jews and if you wanted to be saved then you had to convert to Judaism. Paul was sent by Jesus to spread the gospel among Gentiles, saying, "...*he is a chosen instrument of one to carry my name among the Gentiles...*" (Acts 9:15). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul explained that this was a fact that was hidden for generations, but has now been revealed.

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.
Ephesians 3:6 (ESV)

This is why Jesus sent Paul out as his apostle, to authoritatively preach and teach that salvation was for the Gentiles also, if they received it by faith. Salvation was not a reward to be earned. It was a gift to be received. This was Paul's testimony. He did not deserve the gift of salvation, but Christ Jesus stepped into his life and gave him a glorious gift. He gave him the gift of eternal life. And Paul received that gracious gift. And that gift was so great that thereafter he could not stop talking about it. The gift of knowing Jesus and receiving his Holy Spirit was so sweet that every place he went he would preach and teach about it. This is the glorious good news of gospel.

Conclusion

This is why Paul is encouraging the church to pray. Pray for the salvation of Gentiles—for all unbelievers, because God is a God who desires to save. This is the truth that must be received and believed in order to receive salvation. There is only one God. He sent his only Son into the world as the only mediator between God and men. Jesus alone gave himself as a ransom to set people free from sin and death. Jesus alone rose again to life on the third day to prove that his payment was received by God the Father. Jesus alone is seated at the right hand of God. Therefore pray to the God who desires to save and bring all people to the knowledge of truth.

There are not many ways to God. There is only one and that name of the road is Jesus of Nazareth who is the Christ. This is the truth.

¹⁰ See Ephesians 1:4-7.

Discussion Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God? What are the two desires of God highlighted in this portion of Scripture? (2:4)
2. What does this passage reveal about Jesus?
3. What does the word 'mediator' mean?
4. How are sinful men reconciled to a holy God?
5. What does the word 'ransom' mean? For whom did Jesus die?
6. What does it mean that Jesus "gave himself" as a ransom?
7. What is the "testimony" of which Paul wrote (v.6)?
8. What do the words preacher, apostle, and teacher mean? What is the difference between each of these words?
9. What is universalism?
10. Does this passage teach universalism? Why or why not?
11. What questions do you still have?