GOD WANTS ALL PEOPLE SAVED
1 Timothy 2:3-7

Many Christian question whether God wants all people saved. The passage this morning leads us to believe He does. This does not mean we ignore the doctrine of election in which God chooses His people before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:1-14), but that we balance it with man’s responsibility in responding to God’s call in repentance and faith.

PRAYER FOR EVERYONE, ESPECIALLY LEADERS
IS GOOD AND PLEASES GOD (2:3)

Paul ties in this next section with the last. He says:

“This is good, and pleases God our Savior” (v. 3).

What is good and pleases God? What pleases Him is our prayers on behalf of all people, especially our leaders.

THE REASON FOR OUR PRAYERS (2:4)

Then Paul gives us the reason why we should pray:

“All men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

(v. 4)

In the last section (vv. 1-2), we found that prayer for everyone, and especially all leaders, is good because it is useful to ourselves and to the public at large so it can live and peace. Here, however, Paul focuses on why prayer is good for others: that they may be saved. Here we see that the prayer and its fulfillment are linked with the hope of God’s gracious purpose in man’s salvation.

Moreover, God’s offer is universal. It goes out to everyone. In writing to Titus, Paul stated:

"the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11).

Jesus claimed,

"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (Jn 12:32).

The will of God for the salvation of all sinners is most clearly exemplified in the Cross. As Paul says,

“The love of Christ compels us, because we are convinced that one has died for all” (2 Co 5:14).
Similarly Paul says to the believers living in Rome,

“As one man’s trespass led to the condemnation of all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to the acquitted and life for all men.” (Ro 5:18).

John points out that Jesus

“is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:2).

God offers forgiveness in Jesus Christ and the gift of sonship to all human beings. No one is exempt since

“It is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Mt 18:14).

God desires to be the Savior of all people.

The doctrine of unconditional election and thus particularism runs counter to all that God has revealed in Scripture concerning His intentions in saving humanity (Eze 18:23; 33:11; Jn 1:9; 3:15-18,36; 12:32; Ac 16:31; Ro 2:4; 10:13-17; 2 Co 5:19; Titus 2:11; 2 Pe 3:9; 1 Jn 2:2). God's salvific "call" to repentance is directed toward everyone through the proclamation of the gospel.

Not only is particularism (the belief that only the elect will be saved) unbiblical, but so is universalism, its opposite (the belief that all will be saved). Whereas God wants everyone to be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth, the responsibility for accepting that truth—the message of salvation—rests squarely upon every human being.

The word “wants,” “desires,” “wishes” (thelo) is used in 1 Corinthians 16:7 and Galatians 4:20 and Ephesians 2:3 (thelema) denoting that which is willed. In none of these cases is what is desired guaranteed. Whereas in Ephesians 2:3 where sinful desires are indulged by unregenerate people, as we once were, in 1 Corinthians 16:7 it is questionable whether Paul’s wish will be granted and in Galatians 4:20 it is clear that his wish will not be granted. Because God desires that everyone be saved in no sense guarantees that they will as universalism teaches, that is, that eventually all will be saved.

However, because God’s wills the salvation of everyone, therefore, He wills that everyone should be prayed for.

The truth—the Gospel—should be proclaimed to everyone and it is the duty of every believer to diffuse it far and wide. When it is made known it is the responsibility of those who hear it to acknowledge and receive it.
THE REASON GOD WANTS ALL PEOPLE TO BE SAVED (2:5-6)

Paul proceeds to give us the rationale why God wants all people to be saved:

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time” (vv. 5-6).

The reason God wants all people to be saved is because there is only one God. There is only one Maker, Preserver, Savior and Lord of all people (v. 5).

Peter emphasizes that Jesus’ death embraced all:

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves” (2 Pe 2:1-2).

False prophets and false teachers were “bought” by the “sovereign Lord.” Yet many will choose to “bring swift destruction on themselves” (1 Pe 2:2).

No only is there only one God, but there is only one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

The word mediator signifies “a middle person,” one whose office it is to reconcile two parties at enmity, that is, a peace-maker. The picture Paul paints is that of a God who was offended with the sins of His creatures, yet He reached out in the person of His one and only Son to restore His rebels to Himself. This made it possible for God and people to meet and be reconciled by Him.

Such a reconciliation required a ransom on the part of the peace-maker or mediator. This word signifies a ransom paid for the redemption of a captive, a ransom which consists in the exchange of one person for another or the redemption of life by life. And so Paul applied it to the death of Christ. Matthew and Mark also made this point:

“The Son of Man . . . [came] to give His life as a ransom for many.”
(Mt 20:28; see also Mk 10:45)

Our Lord gave Himself. No one took His life away from Him; He laid it down of His own accord (Jn 10:17-18).

: Scripture seems to contradict this statement because it states that
1. God crucified Christ (Isa 53:4,10)
2. The Jews handed Him over to the Romans to be crucified  
   (Mt 26:67-68; 27:11-26; 23:18-25; Ac 2:23; 3:12-15)
3. The Romans actually put Him to death (Mt 27:27-31; 32-44; Lk 22:63-23:12)
4. All mankind crucified Him (1 Ki 8:46; Ecc 7:20; Isa 64:5-6; Eze 18:4; Lk 23:34;  
   Jn 3:16-17; Ro 3:22-25; Gal 5:14-15)
5. Satan crucified Him (Ge 3; Lk 10:18; Jn 13:27)

. Yet He offered Himself, and because He offered Himself as that sacrifice, peace was  
   made possible through the atoning death of Christ on the cross.

   It was only He who “gave Himself as a ransom for all men” (v. 6).

There is only one God and one Mediator!

**There is no other!**

Because there is no other God, there is no other way for people to be saved.

Paul reasons this way:

1. God is the God and Father of all because there is only one God (v. 5).
2. Jesus Christ is the mediator of all, therefore He gave Himself a ransom for all the  
   people God had made—every human soul.
3. He has revealed His message though His heralds until every people group has heard  
   the message (Mt 24:14).
4. He desires to have all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,
5. He has provided a Mediator for all who has given Himself a ransom for all.

The clause, “the testimony given in its proper time” (v. 6), that is, the time appointed by  
God. In writing to Titus he made this point in a similar way:

   “and at His appointed season He brought His word to light through the  
   preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior” (Titus 1:3).

   We often use the expression, “Timing is everything!” Timing may not be everything, but  
   there are certain times when God moves—designated, specific times— when God brings His  
   revelation and makes things happen.

Paul told the believers at Galatia:

   “But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son” (Gal. 4:4).
Christ came at God’s appointed hour and gave Himself a ransom for all. Jesus’ coming and death happened at the times which seemed best according to divine wisdom. Therefore this was God’s hour for His message to be proclaimed to every nation, people and language. The early apostles began to herald this testimony and it will continue until every people group has heard (Mt 24:14).

**THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH PAUL WAS APPOINTED A HERALD (2:7)**

Paul didn’t just choose to be a herald and an apostle, he was “appointed”:

“And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles” (v. 7).

The reason he was appointed was for the very purpose that people might hear the Gospel and be saved.

What better reason!

And he didn’t run ahead of God. He waited until He was appointed.

He was specifically commissioned to preach the Gospel, not to the Jews, but to the Gentiles—to the nations of the world.

Scripture testifies that Paul carried out this commission fervently, courageously and perseveringly.

**THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE**

It is critical that we who have embraced Christ always display a spirit of love and bear with each other over differences of opinion in secondary matters. Opinion over matters indifferent to fundamental doctrines such as the nature of angels, the details of the *Parousia*, etc. should not cause division. Neither should secondary doctrines such as the issue at hand. Although this issue is important since it centers on whether our hope in perseverance, as defined by the Reformed tradition, is a true or false hope, nevertheless it is a nonessential deduction from Scripture. While it may be essential to some particular theological tradition, it should not be since it is not a fundamental teaching (dogma) of historic Christianity (e.g. trinity, the natures of Christ, salvation, etc.). Secondary doctrines matter too much when they unnecessarily divide fellow believers such as when Reformed and Lutheran Christians separated over the nature of the Lord’s Supper.

We are all called upon to disagree peacefully and thus not undermine and weaken our testimony to a lost and dying world. Fighting and bickering over nonessentials only gives ammunition to the enemy of our souls.
While truth matters, not all truth matters equally (Ro 14:1-15:7). Scripture is clear that there are some things we will never know for sure until “we no longer see but a poor reflection as in a mirror” (1 Co 13:12). Only then will we see "face to face" (1 Co 13:12). Until then humility will help us to hold our own favored interpretations lightly knowing that possibly they may not all accurately reflect God’s truth.

John Wesley, the Arminian, and George Whitefield, his Calvinist colleague, patched up their friendship before they died. In fact, Wesley preached at Whitefield's funeral.

APPLICATION

Jesus Christ wants all people saved! Therefore let us come to him while there is time. Whoever wants may come! The invitation to salvation is open for us all.

God’s sovereign timing is on time. Therefore it is only logical that we trust Him that He knows what He is doing in our lives.

Like Wesley and Whitfield, if we have differences on secondary theological issues, let us not allow them to divide us.

NOTES

2 Ibid., 298.