

# Paul's Message

1 TIMOTHY 2:5-7

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Over the past few weeks, we have been looking at a letter written by the apostle Paul to Timothy, a younger man preaching in Ephesus. As we've learned, Ephesus was a center for worshipping the Greek goddess Artemis (known as Diana to the Romans). Artemis was something of a fertility goddess and was also known as the protector of the hunt, so she is often pictured with various animals. Her temple in Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Well, the church in Ephesus is in danger of drifting spiritually, so Paul writes to try to encourage Timothy to get them back on target. He needs to teach faithfully, he needs to protect the congregation from those who were trying to change God's message, and as we learned last week, Paul encourages Timothy to pray for everybody, but especially for kings and for those in positions of authority. And he is to pray for these leaders basically so that the Christians in Ephesus might be able to live tranquil and quiet lives in all godliness and dignity. As Paul says, ***"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*** So, in this pagan environment, Timothy is to pray. He is to pray for the kind of calm and stable conditions that would allow the word of God to spread.

This morning, we come to the next three verses, and we find ourselves in 1 Timothy 2:5-7 (p. 1855). And into this religiously diverse pagan city, into this city that worships Artemis, Paul explains that the God we worship is unique in every way. The God we worship is not one of many, but he is the only God, unequalled and unrivaled by any other. By the way, there is no real significance to the picture up here. This is just a waterfall up near my sister's place in Washington - Madison Falls, along the Elwha River. Notice, please, 1 Timothy 2:5-7,

***<sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. <sup>7</sup> For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.***

This morning we are here to learn more about Jesus. For those of us here today who already know him, we want to know more. And for those of you here today who don't yet know him in a personal way, we would love to try to help give that introduction. This morning, then, we are here to learn more about him, and as we look at Paul's words here, I want us to notice four truths in this passage.

I. **And we start with the most obvious truth (in verse 5) where we find that THERE IS ONE GOD.**

And this truth goes back to the Old Testament, to Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the heart of the Hebrew scriptures, where Moses says, ***“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”*** According to Jesus, this is the ***“greatest commandment”*** (Matthew 22:37-38). It is the basis of all other commandments. It all goes back to this, that there is ***“one God.”*** And because there is only one God, this means that we are not free to choose between many gods. We don’t have that option. There is one God, and then there are many imaginary gods. Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 8 as he addresses the question concerning whether we can eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols. Apparently, that was a big controversy back then, especially as Gentiles started obeying the gospel. So, we have these new Christians coming straight out of a life of worshiping idols, and some people who had been Christians for a while, those who perhaps never worshiped idols, they would go into the public markets and they would buy meat that had been laid at the feet of various idols as an act of worship. This meat was offered at a discount. Obviously, the idol didn’t eat it. So instead of tossing it, the various temples would have a slightly used meat sale out the back door. Those who were strong in the faith were like, ***“Yes! We are grilling out tonight! We found a 2-for-1 steak sale down at the temple to Artemis!”*** This would be like getting meat at Aldi instead of a legit butcher. It was decent, but cheap. However, if I have you over for dinner, and you have just come out of a lifetime of worshiping Artemis, and if you find out where I got the meat we’re eating, you might have a problem with that, ***“How can I eat this meat that has been sacrificed to a pagan god and prayed over by these pagan priests?”*** And in that context, Paul basically establishes a ***“don’t ask, don’t tell”*** policy. But in that discussion, I want us to notice what Paul says about God - 1 Corinthians 8:4-6,

***<sup>4</sup> Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. <sup>5</sup> For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, <sup>6</sup> yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.***

Of course, his point here is that we as God’s people have some knowledge that others do not have. He goes on to explain, however, that we need to be extremely careful that our freedom does not become a stumbling block to others. But notice what he says about God. We know that there is only one God. But he acknowledges that there are many ***“so-called gods”*** in this world. In other words, there are many imaginary gods out there. But as to real gods, there is only one - God the Father, the one God who made us, the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the first truth in this passage from 1 Timothy 2:5 - there is ***“one God.”*** This message is desperately needed here in Madison.

II. **The second truth in this passage is that THERE IS ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.**

And as we look at this truth, I would point out (again, as we did last week) that both words translated as ***“men”*** in this verse refer not to ***“males,”*** but to mankind, or people; humans! So, there is one mediator between God and people, the person (or human) Christ Jesus. Jesus, then, is the ***“one mediator.”*** A mediator, of course, is a go-between, a bridge, someone who spans a gap, someone who brings two parties together. Today, we might think of a mediator with reference to business, or maybe marriage, or maybe someone who navigates a dispute between neighbors.

When I was working on my degree in organizational leadership and corporate/public communication, we had an entire class on “conflict resolution.” And, of course, in conflict resolution, sometimes a mediator is able to make all the difference. There are many ways of resolving conflict in an organization, but sometimes it takes a skilled and neutral third party, somebody who can see the issue from both sides, someone who can build a bridge. In business, we might bring in a professional mediator, someone who understands the industry, someone skilled in coming to a resolution. In marriage, perhaps we go to a mutually respected friend; maybe we see a therapist. A mediator steps into a conflict and brings two parties together.

Well, Jesus is the **“one mediator”** between God and humanity. There is no other. No one else is even remotely qualified to span that gap. The gap, of course, is caused by our sin. God is perfect, and we are not. When we sin, we sin not only against ourselves and often against others, but most significantly, we sin against God. We have violated God’s law. And we are powerless to make it right. We can’t fix it. So, Jesus (as the Son of God) steps in. He comes to earth as a man, and he defeats all temptations and lives a perfect life. Jesus knows what it means to struggle against sin, and he has come out on top. He is a great High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15). He knows what it means to suffer. He knows what it means to be hungry. He knows what it means to be homeless. He knows what it means to lose a loved one to death. He knows what it means to be betrayed by a close friend. He knows what it means to be tortured and to suffer an excruciating death. So, yes, he can empathize, “Jesus knows all about our struggles” (as we sometimes sing).

But, he is also God. We think of those opening words in Hebrews, **“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”** Jesus understands, then, what it means to be God, but he also understands what it means to be human. And so he stands in the middle as a mediator. And he is the only one! Without trust and faithful obedience to the Son of God, no one has any hope of ever bridging that gap. Jesus is the only way. He makes an exclusive claim. As he says to Thomas in John 14:6, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”** This was true in Ephesus way back in the First Century, and it continues to be true right here in Wisconsin, nearly 2,000 years later. It is critically important that we communicate this truth to the world around us: There is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

### III. And this leads us to the third truth in this passage, that Jesus is the **ONE RANSOM**.

We think about the swap or the payment that takes place in a kidnapping, or in a hostage situation, or maybe with reference to slavery, or maybe with a prisoner of war. In Colossians 1, Paul pictures our position as having been captured by the enemy. In 2 Timothy 2:26, Paul refers to false teachers who have been “held captive by the devil to do his will.” We have been taken away. In the ancient world, an invading army would often take prisoners and would then set a price on each one. If somebody paid, those prisoners could go free; otherwise, the prisoners were either executed or taken away into captivity of some kind. Well, in Colossians 1, Paul says that God “rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

This reference to Jesus offering himself as a **“ransom”** keeps with this theme. We know what a **“ransom”** is. A **“ransom”** is a payment that is made to purchase someone’s freedom. By the way, Jesus uses a form of this word in Mark 10:45. As the apostles were arguing about who would have a place of honor in the kingdom, Jesus had to remind them that, **“...even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give**

***His life a ransom for many.*** Jesus came to this earth for this reason, to offer his life as a ***“ransom for many.”*** He offered himself as a ransom, as a substitute, as an exchange - his life for ours. He took our place.

How did we get into this situation in the first place? Well, we might think back to the picture Paul describes in Romans 6 as he compares sin to slavery. And in that picture, we are not innocent; but instead, he asks the question in Romans 6:16, ***“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?”*** So, in this picture, we haven’t exactly been captured by somebody, but we sold ourselves. At some point in our lives, we knew the difference between right and wrong, and we chose to do wrong. Of course, Paul continues and says, ***“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”*** He eventually closes that paragraph with a warning, ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** So, we chose sin like we might chose a new job (we were not born into it like some churches teach these days), but the wages of sin is death. Jesus, though, buys us back. He ransoms us from slavery. He pays the price for our freedom.

So, Jesus is our mediator. How did he get that title, or description, or position? Paul says (in verse 6) that he ***“gave Himself as a ransom for all.”*** In other words, he willingly did this for us. He offered himself. He chose this. He came here and poured himself out into the form of man (as Paul explains in Philippians 2), he ***“emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”*** He lived here and allowed himself to be betrayed, and ridiculed, and slapped around, and spit on, and scourged, and crucified. As we sometimes sing, there was a time (on the cross), ***“When Christ, the mighty Maker died, for man the creature’s sin.”*** The Creator died for the sin of his own creation. He is our ***“ransom.”***

**IV. So, there is one God, there is one Mediator, and this Mediator (Jesus) gave himself as a ransom. These three truths lead us to another truth, that there is ONE TESTIMONY, there is ONE MESSAGE, and in this case, PAUL IS THE MESSENGER.**

So, he refers to ***“the testimony given at the proper time.”*** The word translated ***“testimony”*** is the basis for the word “martyr.” A martyr, of course, is someone who is killed for his or her testimony. But we have a reference to the ***“testimony,”*** and then he says (in verse 7), ***“For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”*** Perhaps for emphasis, he uses three terms to describe his role here: Preacher, apostle, and teacher. The word ***“preacher”*** is a word that refers to a herald - not H-A-R-O-L-D, but H-E-R-A-L-D. We might think of the guy back in the Middle Ages who would roam around at night, calling out, “It is 2 o’clock and all is well!” I think of the role we usually delegate to our new election officials. By state law there is a statement we are required to read publicly and in a loud and clear voice. If you have been somewhere in Wisconsin at 7 a.m. when the polls first open for the day, then you have heard it, “Hear ye! Hear ye! The polls of this election are now open and will remain open until 8 o’clock this evening!” “Hear ye! Hear ye!” That is the work of a preacher. The preacher is not allowed to change the message, but his job is to as clearly and as accurately as possible communicate the message given to him from the king.

Then, in addition to being a preacher, Paul also refers to himself as an ***“apostle.”*** An apostle is someone sent on a mission. We remember how Ananias was scared to go baptize Paul, but God reminded him (in Acts 9:15-16), ***“Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons***

*of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."* Paul, therefore, was sent to preach to the Gentiles. He was an *"apostle."* And then also, Paul refers to himself here as a *"teacher."* His mission in life is to teach and communicate the good news as clearly and as persuasively as possible.

So here's where this matters to us: Do we believe that there is only one God? Do we believe that Jesus is our Mediator? And do we believe that Jesus gave himself as our ransom? If we do, then this last truth up here applies to us very personally! If we believe this, this matters. This matters more than anything. And we need to get the message out. If we believe this, then we need to be doing what Paul is doing here. Our job is to preach and teach, because we also have been sent with a message. We aren't "apostles" in the same sense Paul was, but we have been sent. All of us here this morning interact with certain people that nobody else in this room might ever reach out to. I run into people you will never meet. You know people I will never meet. Timothy knew people Paul would never meet. Paul, then, tells Timothy to pray, and then he gives him this reminder. God wants all people to come to the knowledge of the truth. We are surrounded by *"all people."* A little bit ago, we passed out some pens. Those pens have the church's address, website, and phone number. You don't need a pen to do this, but I'll be using mine this week as a reminder to talk to at least one more person in my life about the one God we worship, and his Son, our mediator who gave his life as a ransom for us. We have a good message here. We have a good congregation here, and we need to be telling people about it.

### **Conclusion:**

As we close, we want to give a reminder that the invitation to accept Jesus as our mediator and as our ransom is always open. If you have any questions about God's plan, we hope you will get in touch as soon as you can. We would love to study with you. It's possible you've been thinking about it already. Maybe you already know how important it is to turn away from sin. Maybe you know the importance of baptism in God's plan, but you haven't done it yet. Again, if we can help in any way, please get in touch. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, if there is something we as a church can do to help you spiritually, you can let us know right now as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

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