ONE GOD AND ONE MEDIATOR

1 Timothy 2:1-15

Key Verse: 5

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Thank God for the marvelous gospel that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Thank God for encouraging us to fight the good fight. May we always be aware of this battle against the evil one, keeping a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith, holding on to his personal calling for the truth of the gospel. Today’s passage is another wonderful chapter presenting an outstanding theology that there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” uniquely written here in the Bible. One God means he is the God of all, and one mediator means he is the mediator for all. So God wants all me to be saved. May we probe into this heart of God.

Paul says in verse 1, “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—”. In chapter 1, Paul used the word “command.” Now in this chapter, Paul uses the word “urge”, which in Greek is *parakaleó* meaning to exhort and admonish, beseech and entreat and beg or encourage and console. We are reminded of *paraklétos*, the comforter, the Holy Spirit. And then Paul says, “first of all.” In chapter 1, Paul gives a general command to Timothy to fight the good fight. In the following chapters, Paul specifically outlines the things that Timothy must give himself to. Paul begins with the matter of praying for the lost world, evangelistic prayer for the salvation of all. At that time, the atmosphere of the Ephesian church was that only some special people could be saved, those who were advocating for the law as the means of salvation or the elite group of people who have reached a level of knowledge. But Paul urges to pray for the salvation of all people.

Paul says here, “requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone” instead of “prayers made for everyone.” He uses the four different terms regarding prayer. “Requests” is in Greek *deésis,* related to “lack.” It is “supplications” in other translations. This is prayer rising from a sense of need, certainly the need of the gospel or Christ. When we pray, we certainly pray to God. It is to pray being aware of God, his being and his power and glory. “Intercession” is to intercede for the sake of other people. We know that Jesus intercedes for us. Hebrews 7:25 says, “…he always lives to intercede for them, those who come to God through him” and Romans 8:34, “…Christ Jesus…is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Surely He intercedes with compassion and sympathy. Hebrews 4:15 says, “…we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses…” And Romans 8:26 says, “…the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” And prayer is to be offered with thanksgiving. Colossians 4:2 says, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Whatever the result of our prayer may be, we are to give thanks for the privilege to pray to God and the privilege to reach people. So when Paul said, “Supplications, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made” it seems to be a heart-felt, sincere prayer with fourfold emphasis for the salvation for everyone.

Paul continues, “for kings and all those in authority…” We usually think that such people are not in need of something. Yet, in some way, there are also miserable, probably more miserable being ruled by the spirit of this world amid struggle for hegemony. They are also the souls to be saved. And they are in important positions to influence many people. So if we have in mind the advancement of the gospel and the expansion of the kingdom of God in this world, we are to pray for them so that the gospel work of soul salvation be done effectively, not meaning just in a easy way.

Paul continues in verse 2, “that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” All want to live peaceful and quiet lives. Nobody wants to live warring and agitated lives. No one wants to live in a war-broken environment. What a blessing it is to serve the Lord living peaceful and quiet lives in godliness and holiness!

Then verse 3 says, “This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” We are to know that God is God our Saviour mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:1, 2:3 and in Titus 1:3, 2:10, in 3:4 and Jude 25, 6 times in the New Testament. God our Saviour wants all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Here we can infer that Paul was aware of pre-Gnostics who claimed that only elites would possess knowledge and be saved. Paul ends this epistle with these words in 6:20 and 21, “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in doing so have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you.” But here Paul clearly mentioned coming to a knowledge of the truth, which is written together with being saved. So a knowledge of the truth is undoubtedly related to the gospel of salvation. No human knowledge, whatsoever, saves mankind, but only a knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 2:25 says, “Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.” And 2 Timothy 3:7 says, “always learning but never able to come a knowledge of the truth.”

God our Saviour wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Here the “want” is in Greek *theló* (‘*eth-el'-o’*, in phenetic spelling), meaning will, wish, desire. Another word for will is *boulomai* (in the case of “if you are willing” in Lk 22:42). *Thelō* reflects the will of desire springing from feeling and inclination. *Boulomai* speaks of will coming from precise determination.

It is the will of God for all men to be saved. It does not mean that God has willed in the *boulomai* sense that He has precisely determined the salvation of all men, and that is a sovereign given fact so everybody’s going to be saved. Yet in fact people reject God’s will for their salvation. We are also to know that irrespective of people’s rejection God fulfills his will of salvation plan. We need to understand the will of God in both ways, we can say, God’s will of desire and God’s will of determination.

God our Saviour wants all men to be saved, everyone to come to repentance (1 Peter 3:9). Why? Verse 5 says, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” What a connection! God’s will of desire to save all men ratifies that there is one God and one mediator. If there are two gods and two mediators, God wants to save half of mankind, and half by another. That there is one God is the most important teaching in the Bible. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” There is one God and he is the Creator. Revelation 4:11 says, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” And in Revelation 14:6-7, an angel who had the eternal gospel to proclaim said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” And in Revelation 10:6 another angel swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it.”

And Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” Jesus exactly quoted this and said in Mark 12:29, “Here, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Isaiah 44:6 says, “This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.” Psalm 96:5 says, “For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.” And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8:5, “…We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one.” Paul also said in Acts 17:28, “For in him/God we live and move and have our being.”

And there is one mediator. Job says in Job 9:32-35, “He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to mediate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove God’s rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.” Job also says in 16:19-21, “Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, And my advocate is on high. My friends are my scoffers; My eye weeps to God. O that a man might plead with God As a man with his neighbor!” (NASB) What a longing for the mediator! What a cry! That cry is answered in Christ Jesus. Here Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:5, “There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” What an amazing grace! The first occurrence of the word “mediator” in the New Testament. Here the word “men” is in Greek *anthrōpos*, meaning mankind, human race, from which we get anthropology. It is the generic word for “man”, while the word “men”, indicating male, in verse 8 is *Anēr*. But here is the generic word. He became man. He was always God but God became man. He is the perfect God-man. As such He brings God and man together. And so Christ Jesus is that mediator.

There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And we read in Hebrews 8:6, “But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one”, in 9:15, “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant…” and in 12:24, “to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant…” He is the mediator of a new covenant, while Moses was the mediator of the old covenant and so the shadow of Christ Jesus. The man Christ Jesus is the one who takes God and man and restores peace and friendship. He builds a relationship between God and man. He has taken his stand between the offended God and the offending sinner. He has mediated to bring them together.

Here Paul continues in verse 6, “who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.” Now the word “ransom” here is just loaded with meaning. It is not the simple word for ransom, which is in Greek *Lutron*, meaning to pay some money to get back one who is sold as slave or kidnapped. “Ransom” in Greek is *antilutron*, which contains the idea of a substitutionary ransom. It is as if a father was receiving a note about a kidnapped child and the note demanded that he go and become the kidnapped person for the freedom of his beloved child. Christ became the victim that we might be set free. It is the idea of an exchange. Christ exchanged His life for our lives. He died our death. He bore our sin. He took our place. He gave Himself totally as a substitutionary payment for our sin. He is the mediator of a new covenant in his blood as Jesus said in Luke 21:23, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” He shed his blood on the cross, giving his life so that we might have a new life to God. Jesus once said of himself, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). Praise Jesus! Forever praise Him, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for us! Praise God, the only true God, who sent his Son as a ransom for all men!

Here we are to know that since there is one mediator the man Christ Jesus, he is the only way of salvation. That’s why Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” And Acts 4:12 says, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we are must be saved.”

Paul could not stop here. He had to say of himself because the incredible grace of God and of Christ Jesus. He says in verse 7, “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”. Such wonderful grace of Christ Jesus had to be spread to all nations, including to the Gentiles. It could not stop at Paul himself. He confessed, “I was appointed a herald and apostle and a teacher. Herald is one who goes ahead and proclaims in the open public square. Apostle is one being sent. “A teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles” is in most other translations, “a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” Paul was appointed a teacher in faith and truth, who teaches with right content and a right heart of sincerity, and a teacher of the nations of the world. There is a triple emphasis on this calling. He stresses it more saying, “I am telling the truth, I am not lying.” In chapter 1 he testified, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.” He was full of thanks and also had a sense of divine duty at this calling as a preacher, apostle and a teacher of the true faith. When Paul said, “I am tell the truth, I am not lying…in faith and truth”, he had in mind false teachers, who spread false doctrines. This amazing grace should not stop on anyone who has received this marvelous grace but be shared and spread, for Christ Jesus gave himself/his life as ransom for all men. As many people as possible must be saved one after another.

Then Paul says in verse 8: “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.” Here the word “men” is in Greek *andras*, the plural of *anēr*, which is man not in the generic sense but man in the male sense, as opposed to *gunē* which is the female. He talks about the leadership in the church. And the word “want” is in Greek *boulomai*, not the word thelō, which is the will of desire. *Boulomai* is the will of the mind, of mental purpose. Paul is saying, “I demand or I command or I purpose that this should happen, or I lay this down as an absolute. Paul is now in command mode. Therefore, because of the tremendous statement about God and Christ Jesus, Paul was enjoining men everywhere, the official assembly of the church (1 Cor 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:8), to pray for the lost, particularly for the lost souls in the place where there were. Lifting up holy hands does not necessarily emphasize the gesture but related to hearts that are cleansed, sanctified and made holy. And “without anger or disputing” is related to godly and holy living. May God raise up such prayer servants! How important prayer is in the spiritual leadership! The best example of this is Christ Jesus, who prayed even on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34).

Then in verses 9 and 10 Paul says, “I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.” We see that in this world many women’s clothing is to draw men’s attraction. But in worship, it should not be done in that way. In worshipping God, all the worshippers’ attention should go to God, not some particular woman because of her impressive or fancy dressing. That’s a terrible sin before God. In Christian living, women should be concerned about inner beauty rather than outer beauty. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, “…The LORD does not look at the things man look at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” In our society, woman’s provocative wearing seems to be a trend. But Christian women should not follow such trend. They are to dress modestly (having a sense of shame) with godly fear and self-control. I see that those women who love Jesus are truly beautiful inwardly and outwardly as well.

Now Paul says in verses 11, “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” May God help us to correct understand these words. Do you think that it is a right response to say, “From now one we should stop women teaching the Bible, particularly to men”? I don’t think so. The risen Christ said in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” and said in John 21:15, “Feed my lamb.” Have these commands of Jesus been given to men only? Surely, not. Paul said in 2 Timothy, “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who will judge the living the dead and in view of his appearing, I give you this charge: Preach the Word.” This charge is not to men only but to women as well. As for UBF, from the beginning missionary Sarah Barry’s English Bible teaching was so popular and influential. In fact many male students came and received the word of God. And in whole UBF ministry worldwide women’s Bible teaching seems to be more powerful than men’s in their shepherding and raising disciple. Is this against the word of the Bible? Surely, not. We believe that such woman Bible teachers were the instrument of the Holy Spirit.

Let’s now try to understand Paul’s instruction here, for superficial or legalistic understanding causes a lot of problems in a community of God. First of all, Paul clearly said in Galatians 3:25, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” One thing is clear that there is no discrimination between men and women, between all people; men and women are equal in Christ Jesus and so in Christian church. We know that at that time in pagan society men were regarded superior to women. Even in Jewish culture women and children were not counted in number. Women had almost no opportunity for education and upgrading in the society. But here Paul says, “A woman should learn” meaning they can have learning opportunities.

“Let the women learn” is an affirmative statement, affirming the equality of spiritual privilege, the equality of spiritual rights, blessings and promises for men and women. A woman should learn, particularly in quietness and full submission. We know that all Christian should learn to submit to Christ and to one another, as Paul says in Ephesians 5:21, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” However, if women learn in quietness and submission, it will be a powerful factor in their homes and in the church. Apostle Peter also said in 1 Peter 3:3-4, “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”

Let’s think about verse 12, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” The expression, “I do not permit a woman to teach”, seems to be radical written here uniquely in the Bible. First of all, we should try to understand the situation of the church in Ephesus. In the city of Ephesus, a goddess Artemis (Roman equivalent Diana) called the great goddess Artemis (Ac 19:27), with her statue and temple, had great impact upon the people, her being worshipped throughout the province of Asia. Through the work of the Holy Spirit ,those who were under the influence of such pagan culture came to Christ. Women could have equality with men. Their lives were very much enriched. It is apparent that in this church, there were certain women who were desirous of taking the place of an official teacher in the church and usurping authority from the men to lead the church. That was one of the problems, no doubt, under the false leadership of those who had risen to the role of pastor or elder and were doing all they could to undermine the Word of God. Perhaps some certain people who taught false doctrines may have been women themselves. Surely Paul could see a serious problem in the church. Paul stressed that women must be silent. Paul did not point out this in other churches but in the church of Ephesus. A similar thing might have happened in the church of Corinth, where there was the temple the Aphrodite (Roman equivalent Venus) with a thousand priestesses engaging in prostitution. Through abusing the grace of women being equal to men women’s power seemed to be strong in the Corinthian church, too. Paul said in 1 Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 14:34, “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission…” The order was a serious issue in the family and the church. It is also notable that Paul did not write, “the Lord do not permit a woman to teach” but “I do not permit…”, though all the words of the Bible are the words of God. It is as he did in 1 Corinthians 7:8, “Now to the unmarried and the widows I say…” and then in verse 10, “To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord).” I can say this much.

And then Paul says in verses 13-15, “For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” Of course Adam was an obvious sinner, when God condemned his sin, saying in Genesis 3:17, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it…’” Paul also says in Romans 5:12, “…sin entered the world through one man…” and 5:14, “Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam.” Yet, it is true what Paul said here in verses 13 and 14. Paul is talking about order. Then Paul says in verse 15, “But women will be saved/restored through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” It is an undeniable truth in the Bible that both men and women are saved from their sins through faith in Christ Jesus. According to Genesis 3:16, woman’s pain in childbearing was God’s punishment for her sin, when God said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.” Yet childbearing itself is God’s blessing. Genesis 1:28 says, “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number…” We can say that women are more attached to the children, since she bore them from their own bodies. It means that it is a blessing to raise her children, taking them into her arms in the hope that they would grow to be precious men and women of God, as the mother continues in faith, love and holiness with propriety. It can be women’s important role, though men are also responsible in raising children. What a beautiful life it will in this! Those women who have no children fully serve God and raise spiritual children. Again, the point is women’s role and the order in the family and the church.

Thank and praise God for the wonderful truth that there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men. God our Saviour wants to save all men. In this grace may we serve this wonderful soul-saving work of God, offering our earnest and sincere prayers to God and faithfully spreading a knowledge of the truth, the gospel, bearing each one’s role as a man with up-lifting hold hands in prayer or a woman in quietness and full submission. Amen!