

Main Idea: In order to develop a passion for lost people, we need to grasp four characteristics of the gospel which are presented in 1 Timothy 2:5-7.

- I. We must grasp the *exclusive* nature of the gospel (5).
 - A. There is one God.
 - B. There is one mediator.
 1. Jesus qualifies because of who He is.
 2. Jesus qualifies because of what He did.
- II. We must grasp the *inclusive* nature of the gospel (6).
 - A. Jesus' ransom was voluntary.
 - B. Jesus' ransom was costly.
 1. He didn't give something He possessed.
 2. He gave Himself.
 - C. Jesus' ransom was substitutionary.
 1. His death is sufficient for all.
 2. His death is efficient only for those who trust Him.
 - D. Jesus' ransom was timely.
- III. We must grasp the *expressive* nature of the gospel (7).
 - A. Paul was a herald.
 - B. Paul was an apostle.
 - C. Paul was a teacher.
 1. God didn't intend for the good news to be kept secret.
 2. Praying and preaching go hand in hand.
- IV. We must *intercessive* nature of the gospel (8).

Response: Why is a passion for the lost such a big deal?

 1. To fail to pray is to slight the cross.
 2. To fail to reach out is to slight the cross.

What's the most important thing we do as a church? That's the question we began to address last week, and we looked at 1 Timothy 2 for the answer. Let's return there now.

In his autobiography, *Just As I Am*, Billy Graham tells about a conversation he had with John F. Kennedy shortly after his election:

"On the way back to the Kennedy house, the president-elect stopped the car and turned to me, 'Do you believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?' he asked.

'I most certainly do.'

'Well, does my church believe it?'

'They have it in their creeds.'

'They don't preach it,' he said. 'They don't tell us much about it. I'd like to know what you think.'

"I explained what the Bible said about Christ coming the first time, dying on the Cross, rising from the dead, and then promising that he would come back again. 'Only then,' I said, 'are we going to have permanent world peace.'

'Very interesting,' he said, looking away. 'We'll have to talk more about that some day.' And he drove on.

Several years later, the two met again, at the 1963 National Prayer Breakfast. "I had the flu," Graham remembers. "After I gave my short talk, and he gave his, we walked out of the hotel to his car together, as was always our custom. At the curb, he turned to me."

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

'Billy, could you ride back to the White House with me? I'd like to see you for a minute.'

'Mr. President, I've got a fever,' I protested. 'Not only am I weak, but I don't want to give you this thing. Couldn't we wait and talk some other time?'

"It was a cold, snowy day, and I was freezing as I stood there without my overcoat. 'Of course,' he said graciously."

But the two would never meet again. Later that year, Kennedy was shot dead. Graham comments, "His hesitation at the car door, and his request, haunt me still. What was on his mind? Should I have gone with him? It was an irrecoverable moment."¹

Do you have any "irrecoverable moments" in your life, times when God opened a door for you to share Christ and you didn't? On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your burden for lost people? Remember the little poem by C. T. Studd, "Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell."

How do you obtain that kind of concern for the souls of men? 1 Timothy 2 can help us. It begins with prayer, and specifically, prayer for the lost.

Now let's take it a step further. In order to develop a passion for lost people, we need to grasp four characteristics of the gospel which are presented in 1 Timothy 2:5-7.

I. We must grasp the *exclusive* nature of the gospel (5).

Verse 5, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Frankly, verse 5 drives a stake through the heart of modern pluralism and new age pantheism. The Bible says there is *one* God and *one* mediator. Not many, but one.

What occasion brought about the writing of those words? Remember the context. This is a personal letter from Paul to Timothy. Chapter one contains instructions for Timothy, whereas in chapter two, the instructions pertain to church life.

What are churches supposed to do? Out of the multitude of things churches *can* do, we learn in chapter two what they *should* do. We should give primacy to prayer.

Verse 1, "I urge, then, first of all [of first importance], that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone [lit. "for all men"]." And specifically, according to verse 2, "For kings and all those in authority."

What outcome should we seek from praying? Verse 2 concludes, "That we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." Our goal isn't an easy life, but an opportunistic life, a life full of opportunities and free from external hindrances so we can spread the gospel.

Why should we pray? Verses 3-4, "This is good [this type of evangelism-focused praying], and pleases God our Savior who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Those are the reasons we ought to give priority to prayer: because of God's command (1-2) and God's character (3-4). Our God is a saving God who desires men to be saved.

That sets the stage for our text. You say, "I know I should pray more and have a greater burden for lost people, but how can I change?" Start here. Ponder the exclusive nature of the gospel. In what sense is the gospel exclusive? In verse 5, Paul makes two declarations that highlight the exclusiveness of the gospel.

¹taken from *Leadership Journal*, Summer 98, p. 73.

A. There is one God. It's quite possible that here Paul inserted a well-known catechism or liturgy to nail down his point. The first clause affirmed a basic tenet of Judaism, and was repeated at every synagogue service and by devout Jews daily--"There is one God."

In the first of the Ten Commandments God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:3)." In our age of tolerance, it's hard for people to swallow an exclusive statement like that.

Do you know what the Shema is? It's the Hebrew word for "hear," and is a confession of faith cited daily by religious Jews. It comes from Deuteronomy 6:4, "Here, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

Until we're gripped by the exclusiveness of God, we'll never have the passion for the lost we ought to have. Listen to God's invitation in Isaiah 45:22, "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." There is one God.

Someone might say, "So there's one God. I'll buy that. But there are many ways to Him, aren't there?" The answer depends on what your authority is. If it's a survey, your answer will probably be "yes," for no doubt there are plenty of man-made surveys that assert that all religions lead to God. But if your authority is God's Word, you must answer with an emphatic "No! There are not many ways to God." Why not? Because of declaration #2...

B. There is one mediator. "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." What's a mediator? This week Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu met in Washington D.C. to try to bring peace, but to do so they needed a mediator. When there's enmity between parties, a mediator is needed.

Many years ago, Job felt his need for a mediator. Listen to Job 9:33-34, "If only there were someone to arbitrate 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."

A mediator is someone who stands between two parties and acts as a go-between (Barclay). That's what Job needed. That's what every sinner needs. A go-between. An arbitrator. A mediator.

In Old Testament times, the Jew went to the temple where there were many priests. He depended on them to be able to approach God. We don't need *priests*. In fact, we don't need to go to or through a human being to be able to enjoy access to God, not a priest, nor a minister of any kind. Why not? Because we have a *mediator*. Jesus.

No one else in the universe is qualified to be a mediator besides Jesus. No one. What qualifies Him? Two things, according to verse 5.

1. *Jesus qualifies because of who He is.* He is "the man Christ Jesus." The Gnostics taught that there was an endless series of aeons, or sub-gods. Not so, says Paul. There's one mediator, the man Christ Jesus.

Why does Paul here refer to Jesus' humanity? Jesus is God, isn't He? Most certainly (John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Col. 1:15-20). But He's also 100% man. He is the God-man.

I think Paul's responding to the Gnostic and Judaizer elements that were plaguing the church with prejudice. Commentator William Hendriksen writes: "Had salvation been intended only for one particular group--say, only for the Jews--the apostle would have written, '*the Jew* Christ Jesus.' Since it was intended for both Jew and Gentile, that is, for men in general, without distinction of race or nationality, he writes '*the man* Christ Jesus.'"

2. *Jesus qualifies because of what He did.* What did He do? Verse 6 will tell us--He left the glories of heaven to reconcile men to God. He came to earth on a rescue mission. He came to bring God and man together.

Dear friend, realize this. There is only one mediator who can reconcile sinners like us to a holy God. Angels can't bring us to God. Dead saints can't make intercession for us. Mary can't. Only Jesus can. Hebrews 8:6 tells us Jesus is the mediator of a superior covenant, the one that Hebrews 9:15 calls the new covenant.

Is Jesus your mediator? I like J. Vernon McGee's description of what Jesus did (39): "He has put His hand in mine. I don't put my hand in His; He puts *His* hand in mine. That is the wonder of it all! He has come down and put His hand in mine and taken hold of me, but He also holds on to God because He is God, and He has brought us together."

Are you trusting Jesus alone to be your mediator? Do you believe that He is the only mediator? If your zeal for evangelism has grown cold, ponder this--the *exclusive* nature of the gospel. There is one God and one mediator between God and men. A second characteristic...

II. We must grasp the *inclusive* nature of the gospel (6).

Verse 6, "Who gave himself as a ransom for all men, the testimony given in its proper time."

Proper Bible study involves both observation and interpretation. You must observe the facts, and then interpret the facts given in Scripture. We get into trouble when we fail to observe all the facts, or when we come to a faulty interpretation of those facts.

I found an essay by a ten-year old pupil that illustrates the point. It has some correct observation, but incorrect interpretation. It also has some correct interpretation, with incorrect observation. Here it is:²

"The cow is a mammal. It has six sides. Right, left, an upper and below. At the back it has a tail on which hangs a brush. With this it sends flies away so that they do not fall into the milk. The head is for the purpose of growing horns and so that the mouth can be somewhere. The horns are to butt with and the mouth is to moo with. Under the cow hangs the milk. It is arranged for milking. When people milk the milk comes and there is never an end to the supply. How the cow does it I have not yet realized. But it makes more and more. The man cow is called an ox. It is not a mammal. The cow does not eat much, but what it eats, it eats twice so that it gets enough. When it is hungry it moos, and when it says nothing it is because its inside is all filled up with grass."

What do you think of the young person's conclusions about the cow? A little off? Yes, but why? Because his interpretation was based on inadequate observation. He tried to explain the cow based on what he knew, but his knowledge base was not big enough.

The same problem arises when people start talking about the Bible. A little Bible knowledge can be dangerous if we're not careful. We can take Bible words or verses out of context, ignore other verses, and in essence, use the Bible to support non-biblical ideas. In short, faulty observation led to faulty interpretation.

Keep that in mind as you "observe" and "interpret" verse 6: "Who gave himself as a ransom for all men." Does that mean that all men will be saved? If Jesus paid sin's price for all men, then must we conclude everyone will go to heaven? Does verse 6 teach

²taken from H. Hendricks, *Living By the Book*, p. 235.

universalism? Some say it does. But their interpretation is based on observation that ignores many other verses.

So what's Paul saying in verse 6? He's presenting the *inclusive* nature of the gospel. The verse enables us to make four observations about Jesus' ransom payment.

A. Jesus' ransom was voluntary. "Who gave himself." No one forced His hand. His giving was voluntary.

Without a proper view of the person of Christ, His atoning work becomes irrelevant. Lots of "good men" have died for good causes. But Jesus didn't die for a good cause. He came in order to die. He once said (John 10:17-18): "I lay down my life...No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again." His ransom was first voluntary.

B. Jesus' ransom was costly. "Who gave himself as a ransom." Terrorists take hostages and demand a *ransom* payment. A "ransom" is the price paid to free a captive. What did Jesus give as a ransom payment for us? It was indeed costly.

1. *He didn't give something He possessed.*

2. *He gave Himself.* It cost Jesus His very life to reconcile men to God. His life for ours, that was the ransom price. It was a costly ransom.

William Barclay tells the story of a man who lost a son in the war. The man had lived a godless life, but the death of his son brought him face to face with God as never before. He became a changed man. One day the man stood before the local war memorial, looked at his son's name on it, and spoke these words gently, "I guess he had to go down to lift me up."

That's what Jesus did. A holy God can't just overlook the problem of sin. Because He's just, He must deal with it severely. And because He's gracious, He did! Jesus gave His life as a ransom for us, a costly ransom. A third observation...

C. Jesus' ransom was substitutionary. "Who gave himself as a ransom *for all men.*" What does that mean? The Greek preposition *huper* means "in behalf of," or "in exchange for." It indicates that Jesus' death was *vicarious*, for the benefit of others. His atonement was substitutionary.

Beloved, this is holy ground. Do you know what happened on the cross? Jesus became a substitute. He willingly traded places with us. He stretched out His arms and allowed His holy Father to explode His righteous wrath against Him. Though innocent, He became sin for us so that we, though guilty, might be declared righteous in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). That's the doctrine of *substitutionary atonement*.

For whom did Jesus give His life as a ransom? The NIV says, "for all men." The KJV states, "for all." It's the third time we've seen that phrase in verses 1-6: verse 1--prayers are to be made *for all men*; verse 4--"who will have *all men* to be saved; and verse 6, "who gave himself a ransom *for all.*"

Remember, Paul's reacting to a spirit of exclusivity in the First Church of Ephesus. The Judaizers and Gnostics asserted that only certain people qualified for salvation. That kind of mentality elsewhere prompted Paul to pen these words (in Romans 3:29-30): "Is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith."

Are we supposed to take the gospel to only certain people? Are we to pray only for particular groups or classes or races? Absolutely not. We're to pray for all men (1). God desires all men to be saved (4). Jesus' ransom payment was for all (6).

But wait. How do you reconcile a verse like 1 Timothy 2:6 with Jesus' words in Mark 10:45, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom *for many*." Why didn't Jesus say *all* there? And what about Jesus' words in Matthew 22:14, "Many are called, but few are chosen."? And there are other texts which indicate that God has chosen a people who benefit in a special way from the atoning work of Christ (John 6:37, 39, 44; 10:14).

How do we reconcile 1 Timothy 2:6 with these texts? The key, in my opinion, is to remember this. 1 Timothy 2:6 is dealing with the *sufficiency* of the atonement, not its *design* (see MacArthur, 72). Or to sum it up with two simple statements...

1. *His death is sufficient for all.* But...

2. *His death is efficient only for those who trust Him.* Or to put it another way, Jesus' atonement was sufficient for all, but efficient only for the elect.

Let that sink in. The atonement of Christ is sufficient to save anyone: Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, civil or pagan. That's why there must be no favoritism in our praying or witnessing. We are to pray for and share the gospel with all men without distinction, for without Christ, all men are lost.

Jesus' atonement is sufficient for all. But that doesn't mean all will be saved. Though Jesus' ransom payment was sufficient for all, it is efficient only for those who trust in Him. A comment by John MacArthur helps clarify (72): "Christ's death was *sufficient* to cover the sins of all people, but it is applied to the elect alone. The price paid was infinite. If billions more had been added to the number of the elect, Christ would not have been required to suffer one more stroke of divine wrath to pay the price for their sin. On the other hand, had there been but one sinner, Seth, elected of God, this whole divine sacrifice would have been needed to expiate His guilt...So the infinite price our Savior paid was certainly sufficient for all."

That's why our job is to offer the gospel to all. Indeed, our Savior's ransom was substitutionary. A fourth observation...

D. Jesus' ransom was timely. "Who gave himself as a ransom for all men--*the testimony given in its proper time.*" Or, "in due time," as the KJV puts it. Christ gave Himself as a ransom exactly at the right time in God's redemptive plan (see Gal. 4:4-5).³

Fanny Crosby understood the *inclusive* nature of the gospel. "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave; Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus the mighty to save. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying; Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save."

Has your heart grown cold towards the lost? Then go to the cross. Meditate on Jesus' ransom. It was voluntary, costly, substitutionary, and timely. Be gripped by the *inclusive* nature of the gospel.

III. We must grasp the *expressive* nature of the gospel (7).

The gospel is such good news that it must be *expressed*, not hoarded. 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."

He says, "For this I am ordained." The "I" is emphatic, and by it Paul expresses his sense of personal wonder. "Just think of it! *I* was appointed. God ordained *me* to be a preacher of the gospel! Wow!" God gave Paul a threefold role.

³Don't miss that prayer is based on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

A. Paul was a herald. A herald proclaims the facts.

B. Paul was an apostle. An apostle commends the facts as an eyewitness.

C. Paul was a teacher. A teacher explains the facts so that men will understand their significance.

Oh, beloved, it's not enough to know the facts that Jesus died and rose again. We must know why. We must know what those facts mean. We must know what those facts mean for us.

The sad truth is, hell will be full of people who knew the facts. But they didn't appropriate what they knew.

That's why we must both herald and teach in our evangelism. We must proclaim the facts, yes, but we must also teach people the significance of those facts. Indeed, Christ died on a cruel Roman cross, but why? Do you know? Do your neighbors know? Do your children and grandchildren know? Have you told them?

There are two practical lessons here for us.

1. *God didn't intend for the good news to be kept secret.* Paul called himself "a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles." The AV renders it, "a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity." I think the latter fits better here. He's giving us two marks of his teaching ministry: he taught in faith and in verity (the same word is translated "truth" in verse 4).

Beloved, there are lost people all around us that need to know the truth. Is it your passion to make Christ known? Do you see those words, "I am telling the truth, I am not lying."? Do you know why Paul wrote those? Because not everyone shared his passion for the lost. In fact, the Judaizers accused Paul of being "soft" because he preached grace, not law, to Gentiles. Why'd he do it then? Because of the call of God. He knew that God didn't intend for the good news to be kept secret.

2. *Praying and preaching go hand in hand.* That's the point of this section. The thrust of verse 1 is *pray!* The thrust of verse 8 is *pray!* The thrust of verse 7 is *preach!* Pray and preach because the gospel is exclusive, inclusive, and expressive.

IV. We must intercessive nature of the gospel (8).

Notice verse 8, "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." Paul isn't launching a new theme here. He's pointing out an essential for seeing the gospel advance, namely for men to lead the way in praying. They must pray "with holy hands" (i.e. with God-honoring lives) and "without anger or disputing" (i.e. with a track record of godly relationships and motives).

Response: Why is a passion for the lost such a big deal?

We'd never say this, but sometimes we think it, "All this talk about being burdened for the lost isn't for me. As long as I'm going to heaven, what does it matter?" What does it matter?! Beloved, *who* are you going to see when you get to heaven? What are you going to tell Him when He asks you what you did with the message of the cross?

We must remember two things...

1. *To fail to pray is to slight the cross.* And...

2. *To fail to reach out is to slight the cross.*

To do: So let's spend time praying for the lost...in our families...in our community...in the world. And then let's leave this place and reach out to those around us.