

1 Timothy 2:3-7 – *This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 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.*

God our Savior Desires All Men to Be Saved Jesus is the One Mediator of that Truth

Introduction

I don't remember anymore the seasons of the year when things happened. The year was 1976, and I was 10 years old, growing up just outside of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, where my Mom and Dad owned a 10 acre "hobby farm."

There were certain letters and words I learned that year – although what it really all meant was beyond me at the time. I knew that on my Dad's black metal lunch box there was the red, white, and blue decal with the letters IAM on it, and that every day he would go into work, either working days (7 a.m. to 3 p.m.) or nights (3 p.m. to 11 p.m.) at a place called G & L.

But it was in that year 1976 that my Dad stopped going to G & L for work, instead going to a place called Kearney and Trecker in Milwaukee. I also heard my parents talk quietly about a place called Boise, Idaho. It was all because there was a strike going on at G & L. As that strike wore on, there were other words and letters I heard – "picket line" and "scabs." And toward the end of that year, I also started hearing the letters NLRB.

Since that time of my growing up years, of course, I have learned more of what went on. I understand now that G & L, the company where my Dad worked as a machine tool operator, Giddings and Lewis, was a union shop, and the strike was called by the IAM, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Union, because of a disagreement between management and the union. That strike was a nasty one, including management property being damaged by out-of-work men walking the picket line, with nails and shattered glass being

strewn across the parking lot to make it difficult for the scabs, those people who crossed the picket line to keep G & L operating.

Things finally got to the point where the NLRB was called in – the National Labor Relations Board. Management and the union were not able to come to an agreeable solution on their own. They needed to have someone intervene, to have someone come into the middle, to bring things to some kind of a conclusion. However – and I think this goes to show (as I was led to understand) just how desperate the situation was – to get the NLRB involved meant that both sides first needed to agree that they would accept the solution reached by this government agency - regardless of exactly what that solution would turn out to be. Once the NLRB was brought into the middle, they were the ones, the only ones, who could dictate how this strike would be brought to an end.

From beginning to end, the strike lasted for at least a year; just because the NLRB got involved didn't mean that things would move quickly; but they did their work, and the strike did finally come to an end.

I can't say for sure – but I would definitely imagine that the solution was not a perfectly satisfactory one. No doubt the owners and management grumbled about having to pay more in salary and benefits than they wanted. No doubt the union workers were not 100% satisfied with the fact that non-union workers were allowed in the shop.

But the mediators, the NLRB, had spoken, and that was it – happy or not, it was over!

The fact that the Apostle Paul uses the word he does here in 1 Timothy 2:5 – "Mediator" – assumes that there are two sides, two parties which are, for whatever reason, separated; the two parties being, as he writes, "God and man." For a Mediator to be present means that there was no other way; that the two sides on their own could not find a solution to what separated them. And – now that the Mediator was on the scene, the ONE Mediator, the ONLY One there is or even could be, would both sides be satisfied with His work, with His solution to the impasse?

In seeing the Lord's solution we rejoice – for we are brought face to face once again with the astounding, astonishing, amazing grace and love of God!

The IMPASSE

In the case of the 1976 strike at Giddings and Lewis, there was plenty of fault on both sides for the impasse that was reached in their labor dispute.

Not so with the impasse between “God and men.” The reason for this separation was sin – sin on the side of mankind.

The truth of this situation is well documented in Scripture!

Initially the created world was just like its Creator – “good” – even “very good.” There was no taint, no shadow, no imperfection anywhere to be found in what God had made.

It wasn’t until the man and his wife disobeyed God that “sin entered the world.” (Romans 5:12) To God’s gracious words, God’s invitation to ‘fess up and repent, the now-no-longer-naked, rebellious couple stumbled all over themselves to place the blame on someone else – the man on the woman and on God; the woman on the serpent, the devil.

It was through their sinful act, as Paul later wrote that “death [came] by sin; and so death has spread to all men, for all have sinned.” (Romans 5:12)

And that “all men” means “all men.” “There is not one who does good; no, NOT ONE.” (Psalm 14:3)

“That which was born of the flesh,” flesh handed down from Adam and Eve, “is flesh.” (John 3:6)

There is nothing intrinsic in man, no innate ability, no trait which could be learned, which could change things.

The passage of time did not bring with it any changes for the better either. “When men began to multiply on the face of the earth... then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ... So God looked upon the earth and indeed it was corrupt; for ALL FLESH had corrupted their way on the earth.” (Genesis 6:1, 5, 12)

Even after washing the world clean with the flood, the stubborn stain of sin stayed. “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake,” the Lord said in His heart, “although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” (Genesis 8:21)

Humankind was at a dead end. God had said that one sin is all that it would take – “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10) and here was mankind, out of whose heart “proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.” (Mark 7:21-22)

Mankind, lost in sin, dead to God, was at an impasse, for “without faith it is impossible to please [God].” (Hebrews 11:6) There is absolutely nothing that mankind could do to remedy, fix, or change his standing before God.

For that same God, the One who had been perfect and holy at creation, still was holy and perfect. “I am the LORD,” He says in Malachi 3:6; “I do not change.” His perfection and holiness have remained intact and inviolate through all of mankind’s sin. “I the Lord your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2)

And as the holy God, who saw the wickedness of the pre-Flood world, He still sees and still “knows all things.” (John 21:17) As the psalmist wrote, “O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.” (Psalm 139:1-4)

God and mankind were at an impasse of epic proportions – all due to man’s rebellion, man’s sin, man’s failure! On the one hand is God in His holiness demanding perfection, and on the other hand is mankind with his utter lack of perfection. Is there a solution to this impossible situation? Yes! “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” (Luke 18:27)

The SOLUTION

With the 1976 strike at Giddings and Lewis, both sides came to the conclusion that mediation was needed. They both admitted that finding a solution to their impasse was beyond their ability. Both sides needed outside help to come up with a solution for the impasse.

Such an admission of need for help or lack of ability to solve the impasse of sin between God and sinful mankind would never be forthcoming – not from sinful mankind.

It is only when a person has been brought to faith that he is able to see how utterly lost he was in his sin! It is only when the Holy Spirit has enlightened us with the Gospel that we are able to see how black is the darkness of unbelief in which we were born – and the incredible glory of God’s gracious plan of salvation!

It is true that everyone is born with a conscience. And that conscience in everyone, to some extent, witnesses to the existence of a “god” out there – a “god” who will judge, a “god” who is angry over sin.

But without the revelation of the truth of salvation sinful mankind foolishly and blindly seeks to remedy sin by himself, to appease the anger of that “divine being” by himself, even deceiving himself into thinking that he is able to succeed in doing so!

History is full of examples of sinful man’s endeavors to please, to appease, to cool the anger of, “god,” of man’s efforts to find a way to deal with sin, from “sweating sin out” in the steam lodges of the Nez Perce of Idaho, to the extreme of human sacrifices such as practiced in Old Testament Bible times, when there were those who “caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech.” (e.g. 2 Chronicles 33:6) The sadly mistaken conviction lying behind such actions is that if I but sacrifice something of importance to me, then “god” will certainly have to be pleased with me!

We need to be careful to make a distinction, however – for the Old Testament people of Israel had their sacrifices, too – how many hundreds of thousands of goats, rams, sheep, and bulls had been slain on altars over the centuries! The difference lies in the fact that while unbelieving man makes his sacrifice in order to try to pay for sin, to appease “god” – the sacrifices offered on the altars of the Israelites were made with the knowledge of God’s revealed truth: “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:4)

There is no solution to sin if things are left in the hands of sinful humans!

The one and only Solution to the impasse of sin is Jesus Christ!

This salvation solution has been God’s plan from all eternity! As the theme passage of our convention states: “God our Savior desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth!”

God knew that if anything was to be done to take care of sin, it would have to be He who did it.

There was a price that had to be paid, after all, for the impasse over sin to be solved. Sin and its guilt could not just be swept under the rug. God could not just look the other way.

So in the “great love with which He loved us,” (Ephesians 2:4) God “gave His only begotten Son,” (John 3:16) the Son who as Paul says here in 1 Timothy “gave Himself as the ransom.”

“[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us!” (2 Corinthians 5:21) “He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father!” (Galatians 1:4)

It is in Him that the price for sin has been paid! As Luther put it in words that echo those of Peter (1 Peter 1:19): “Not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood, and His innocent sufferings and death.”

As the Son of Man, Jesus came to earth as our brother, living as we live, facing the very same earthly life that we face, with all of its trials, tribulations, and temptations. But in doing so, as we read in Hebrews 9:7, He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Jesus was the Son of God in the flesh, from the moment of His conception on, as the angel told both His step-father Joseph (“that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” {Matthew 1:20}) and His mother Mary (“That Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” {Luke 1:35})

And as that Son of God, the life He lived was holy, and as a result the Passion He endured was substitutionary – in our place, as Isaiah put it so well – Isaiah 53:4ff – “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; ... and by His stripes we are healed. ... The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Jesus is the Redeemer - the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

In Jesus the IMPASSE of sin between God and man is removed!

Jesus is the SOLUTION! The ransom price has been paid by our Redeemer! “It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” (Colossians 1:19-20)

Jesus stands in the middle! He is “the one Mediator between God and men!”

Is He SATISFACTORY?

The SATISFACTION

Workers and the owners and management at Giddings and Lewis were told that when the NLRB stepped in as the mediator, they would have to live with whatever decision was made.

Was the NLRB’s work as mediator satisfactory? Well, my Dad finally did get to go back to work at G&L. But not everyone did. Just this last week I spoke with a man at a funeral at Luther Memorial in Fond du Lac who was so upset by the vandalism and criminal activity that happened on the picket line that he quit G&L and went to work elsewhere.

The NLRB solution was far from perfect!

How about Jesus? Was the redemptive work He did to solve the impasse of sin satisfactory? Is He qualified to be “The One Mediator between God and men” as Paul states in our theme? To have our options narrowed to only One who can serve as Mediator may give some cause to worry – what if He is not satisfactory? What then? We would have no one else to whom to go!

So that Serpent, Satan, would tempt us to think! He would have us doubt the sufficiency of God’s solution. He would have us wonder if there is not something that must be added to what Christ has done, some works or deeds on our part to supplement or even replace the salvation work of Jesus.

It is true – for us to be saved, for Jesus to be sufficient as a Mediator between God and men, He and His work have to be absolutely perfect! “OK” isn’t good enough in this case!

How wonderful it is to have the testimony of the true, faithful, reliable God in His Word! What a blessing it is for us as God’s people to have assurance that the salvation Jesus has won in our behalf is all we need!

In God’s Word we see that there is nothing we need to add to what Jesus has already done: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

How many of the people of this earth did God not only desire to save (“ALL men”) but also for whom did He give Himself a ransom (“for ALL”)?

That “death He died” – who was it for? “He died to sin once for ALL.” (Romans 6:10)

Jesus is not of the same order as those Old Testament priests who descended from Aaron, who served as mediators between God and His people. “He does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for ALL when He offered up Himself.” (Hebrews 7:27)

Jesus is the satisfactory Mediator, because He was the satisfactory sacrifice! “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [satisfactory sacrifice] for our sins... and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2:2, 4:10)

Close

It is God’s desire that “all men be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Yes, there was an

IMPASSE

between God and man – an impasse of our own making...

“For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.”

(Romans 3:23)

...but there is a

SOLUTION...

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

(1 Corinthians 15:57)

... and that solution, the Man Christ Jesus, the One Mediator between God and man, is completely

SATISFACTORY!

“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

(Hebrews 2:17)

—Pastor Paul T. Krause

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