

Russell Kelfer

There Is Only One

1218-B

Series: I Timothy

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

There Is Only One

Richard DeHaan tells the true story of an elderly gentleman named Mr. Kline. Mr. Kline had lived a tough life and, now, in his sunset years, saw no reason for going on. He was lonely, discouraged, and wasn't sure that anyone really cared. One Sunday evening, however, when the old man was just about at the end of his rope, he was walking down the street and he happened to pass a church where a service was in progress. Nearing the open front door of the church, he couldn't help but hear the melodic sounds of a popular hymn. The words were these, "Jesus died for all mankind, and Jesus died for me."

Mr. Kline, it seems, like some of us, had hearing that wasn't quite perfect. When they sang the words, "Jesus died for all mankind," he thought they were singing, "Jesus died for old man Kline." He bolted, the story goes on, and rushed into the church, where he heard the Gospel for the first time and was gloriously saved, and all because he heard the wrong words...or did he? You see, the song could have been written either way. Jesus did die for old man Kline, and that was what he learned when he went inside that Church.

The Gospel, you see, is that personal. It is also that specific. Jesus (no one else) died for you. It could happen no other way. Had you been the only sinner who ever lived, He still would have died. So Mr. Kline really heard it right the first time. There was only *one* way to be saved. Poor old Mr. Kline had simply lived a lifetime without hearing about it. And he was not alone.

Millions walk the streets today, even in Gospel-saturated America without understanding that "Jesus died for me". They may understand *who Jesus was*; they may even understand *what Jesus did*. But the personal, experiential transaction of trading their life for His by accepting His free offer of salvation is not a reality. You wonder how that could be. The airwaves are brimming with televangelists and radio evangelists. There are churches on nearly every corner. Religious buzz-words are now so common that people are referred to as *born-again* Christians even in the secular press.

There Is Only One

But all of that hype and all of that religion only serves to further demonstrate the problem. The problem is that the vast majority of men and women walking this earth today and even many, who regularly attend church, do not understand what it means to be *born-again* or *regenerated* or *saved*. And one-on-one interviews with many who claim to be evangelical Christians will reveal that though they know all *about Christ*, they don't really *know Christ*.

You may be one of those people. You may attend church regularly, you may sing in the choir, teach Sunday school, invite your friends to visit your church, even be in a weekday Bible Study. You may live a moral life, give a good amount of what you earn to God's work, you may even have your children in a Christian school, and stand in your community for what is good and noble. But when all the veneer is stripped away, and the truth of the matter is sorted out, you've never personally asked Christ to come into your life and be your Savior.

Guess what? None of those other things even matters! In fact, all of your frantic religious activity not only doesn't help you, it gets in your way; because subtly, ever so subtly, you buy the lie that God won't turn His back on someone so spiritually active and morally good.

The Apostle Paul clearly understood the problem. It was as pressing an issue in the early church as it is today. Even though Calvary was still fresh in their minds chronologically, it was often not a part of their lives realistically. And so as he wrote to young Timothy, his young son in the faith, whom he had pressed into service to straighten out the problems in the Ephesian church, he made absolutely certain that Tim understood one vital fact. That fact is the world is looking for answers, and there is *only one*. The world is seeking a way to God. There is *only one*. The church is inventing a variety of gospels. There is *only one*.

That is what Paul wrote in I Timothy, chapter two, and where we continue today with an in-depth look at verses 3-7, quoted from the NIV translation. Our title for today's study is "There is Only One".

This is good, and pleases God our Savior,
who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge
of the truth.

For there is one God and mediator between God and men,

There Is Only One

the man Christ Jesus,
who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony
given in its proper time.

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. (I Timothy 2:3-7 NIV)

I trust you recognize the passage from our last study. Paul is in the midst of an exposition on prayer, and he has instructed Tim to teach men to pray constantly for all men that they might be saved. It's good to do so because it's in harmony with God's nature, and it pleases God because it's a key to His inner heart of hearts. Now Paul gives the reason that this kind of unselfish prayer for the souls of men so pleases God. And he reiterates, in the process, the plan of God for the ages in such clear language that neither Timothy nor the Ephesian church could help but understand it.

The problem then, however, was the same as it is today. People did not want a *simple gospel*. They wanted man to be needed to interpret it, so they had to complicate it first. Secondly, they did not comprehend a *narrow gospel*. The natural man with Adam's mind responded to God's clear instructions the way Eve did, "Hath God said?" Why would God be so restrictive? Why not eat of *any tree*? Those two problems confronted the Ephesians and they are our public enemies number one and two as well.

And so, Paul, in just two or three sentences summarized the whole Gospel message, and in fact, the very meaning of life itself. There are several key words that unlock God's treasure-house in this passage. The first is the word *one* that defines the *uniqueness of God*. The second is the word *mediator* that defines the *position of God*. The third is the word *ransom* that defines the *work of God*. And the fourth is the word *all* that defines the *universality of God's plan*.

The underlying thought behind the whole passage is that when all is said and done, there is only one: one God, one mediator, one plan, one purpose, one reason for living. There is only one. And falling prey to Satan's manipulative plan for deceiving the flock, man has bought some incredibly naive alternatives. It is the saddest of stories. It began in that garden and has been perpetuated by Adam's seed every since. Slick, educated, inventive, literate man who appears to have such a

There Is Only One

grasp on the computer age, is still in the garden with Adam when it comes to believing the simple, uncluttered, uncompromising plan of God for salvation. And yet in the light of this one decision that God asks man to make, how many bytes of information you can store on a laser disk, or how many men you can send to the moon, are not even important. This choice involves eternity. It was up to Timothy to set the record straight. Let's listen again to Paul's super-simple explanation.

I- ONE GOD

The passage begins with a childlike statement that often goes unnoticed, but was crucial to the heresy facing the Ephesian church. Paul states: "There is one God". The Amplified Bible, J.B. Phillips and others add, "There is [only] one God", and this is more accurate in our language. For he was not saying there is (at least) one God, or there is (one or more) gods, he was clearly saying there is (exclusively) one God. And this, of course, is in harmony with the rest of Scripture.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

(Deuteronomy 6:4 NIV)

In Deuteronomy 5:7 God had instructed them,

You shall have no other gods besides me.

(NIV)

And cults have through the ages perpetuated the same lie that the nations round about Israel had tried to subtly sell the Jew that Jehovah may be a god, maybe even a preferred god, but certainly not the *only God*. That's why such encounters as Elijah's on Mount Carmel were so necessary. It is essential to the nature of God that He is God alone. If there are other gods, then Jehovah is not who He claims to be. And if He is not who He claims to be He is a liar and *cannot be God*.

The cults hate that. They want to mirror the devil's lie that if you must accept the existence of God, at least believe that man can be a co-god. The Mormons and others have carried it to its satanic conclusion and blasphemed God beyond comprehension. Ken Taylor rightly paraphrases Mark 12:28,29 this way,

... "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

Jesus replied, "The one that says, 'Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is the one and only God'"

(TLB)

Paul wrote it as clearly as it can be written in Ephesians 4 where he said,

There Is Only One

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;

one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:4-6 NKJV)

Case closed. But if someone tells you they belong to Christ, or want to become a Christian, and they consider God as *one of many*, or Christ as less than God, stop dead in your tracks and go back to the basics. God not only needed no help in creating the world, or redeeming man, or sustaining life, or maintaining eternity, *He cannot have a co-god and be God*. By nature of His being, He is the only One!

That means that His being unique is essential to His being God. As the little poem reminds us:

If there are more, He isn't;
If others are, He's not.
If God is not the only God,
With Him don't cast your lot.

Because, you see, if God is
The Truth He claims to be,
He cannot be a liar
And still be Truth, you see.

And He has said...I AM is,
That means "the Only One";
But if He is, praise God...believe,
For life is in His Son.

So the uniqueness of God is crucial to Paul's argument. All of life is seeking after a god. *There is only One*. All of the world longs for a Savior. *There is only One*. All of mankind longs for an answer to fill the void in their soul. *There is only One*. This passage does not refute the Trinity; it confirms it. It does not say that God exists in only one expression (Father), but rather it confirms that the God who says of Himself, that He exists as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the One.

II- One Mediator

Paul goes on. Not only is there only one God...there is only one mediator between God and men. He is the man, Christ Jesus. The word *mediator* used here is the Greek word *mesites*. It

There Is Only One

literally means *one who intervenes between two, to restore peace; to ratify a covenant, or to effect reconciliation*. The implication is that God and man have broken fellowship. They are in a state of estrangement. Sin has separated every man who ever lived from a Holy God. And man found no way to approach this Holy God because *no matter how hard he tried*, his sin nature came between him and God, and he found no way to absolve the sins he committed *because of that sin nature*. It was a hopeless case. Thus, this same word is found in the Greek rendering of the Old Testament in Job 9 where Job vents his frustration, then asks the only logical question:

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 arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both,

someone to remove God's rod from me, (Job 9:32-34a NIV)

"If only there were a mediator," Job cries, "someone to bridge the gap between God and me. Then I could communicate with Him, and then there could be peace."

Job was right. And God had a plan to do just that. Even before the worlds were formed, God had such a plan. Thus, the writer of Hebrews was able to write in Hebrews 12,

You have come to God, the judge of all men...

[You have come] to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant,
(Hebrews 12:23b, 24a)

The new covenant would reconcile men with God, and the mediator, or the one who would stand in the gap and reconcile the two was Jesus.

There is a way, but there is *only one*. You must understand that. Man has tried for centuries to be reconciled to God *any other way*. He has tried religion, good works, morality, and philosophy, but to no avail. He is still separated from a holy God. In fact, the harder man tries, the more complex his problem becomes; because the farther he travels towards God, the more confident he becomes that he will reach Him. But it is impossible. Without coming by faith, it is impossible to please God. You cannot reach Him. You say, but I've lived a better life than so-and-so. Wonderful. Let's assume that your "good" life has gotten you 42% of the way across that chasm that exists between you and God,

There Is Only One

and your friend, whom you do not think is as good as you, is only 36% of the way. Are you any better off? Which is better? To swim halfway across the ocean and be eaten by a shark? Or to swim a third of the way and drown? Either you get across or not, and *apart from something supernatural, you cannot make it to God.* You look like the man in this diagram. He is desperately trying to make it to God on His own efforts, but the harder he tries, the more frustrated he gets, *because he never quite gets there.*



God knew that. So He found a *mediator*. He found the one person who “knew no sin”, who never tasted its destruction, and He let that person “become sin for you”. He came across from God’s side and made a bridge across the chasm and became the mediator, the one to effect reconciliation. The cross became the instrument, the only one, to make a way back to God. Now the choice was man’s, but the way was made.



That’s why Jesus was able to say, “I AM the way (back to God). No man can come to the Father but by Me.” No one. “I AM the only one.” Narrow? No. Wonderful? Yes. If you were dying of a dread disease, and the doctor came to you and said, “We’ve found a cure, but there’s only one. All you have to do is take this pill.” Would you pout and argue, “Keep looking, there’s got to be

There Is Only One

a more complicated way. Let's try surgery, or therapy, or intense radiation? Your way is too simple." Or would you be so filled with gratitude that you ran all the way to the pharmacist with that prescription, singing songs of praise that there was indeed a way. You say, "But I don't need Christ. I'm a good person." Congratulations. You may be the best person in hell. Does that comfort you? I'd far rather be the least deserving person in heaven than the most righteous in hell. You say, "But that's too simple. You're asking me to simply accept what someone else did as total payment for my sins, and let Him take me across to God? I was counting on doing something."

The story is told of a major food manufacturer who came up with an instant cake mix that required nothing but adding water. They put it on the market, but it didn't sell. When canvassed, prospective customers argued that it couldn't work; it was too easy. So the same company reintroduced the same product and required the buyer to add his own eggs. It sold like wildfire. But God can't do that. "All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God".¹ God can't let you share in His Glory; you have no claim to that glory. So He did it all. All. If He did it all, then there is nothing you can do but accept the gift He already gave, for the price for it all has been already paid.

How many ways are there to God?
How many roads get through?
How many options does man have
If the Word of God is true?

Only the sinless one paid the price
Therefore, only He can
Be the one Mediator
Between the one God and man.

How many highways to heaven?
Are there options besides the Son?
No, Beloved, the Scripture is clear
There is only One!

Only One, one God, one Mediator between God and man... the man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself, the ransom. He didn't give the ransom Himself; He gave Himself the ransom. What a difference. He didn't simply pay the price, He was the price. Even as Abraham, on that mountain about to slay His only son, heard

¹ Romans 3:23

There Is Only One

the angel say, “God will provide *Himself* the lamb,” so you and I have been offered that same act of substitution. The word *ransom* is the Greek word *lutron*, which simply means *to loosen; to set free, to liberate*. It meant an act of atonement, the paying of an equivalent price or receiving equivalent punishment, therefore freeing the one guilty from the consequences—a ransom. Jesus spoke of Himself in Mark 10:45, using this word, when He said,

For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. (NKJV)

The story is told of a little boy who, with his father’s help, built a beautifully crafted sailboat. But one day, as he sailed it on the lake near his house, a strong wind came along, and before he knew what happened, it sailed out of sight. It was lost. But one day, several months later, the boy went into town to buy some things, and looking in a store window, saw his own boat being offered for sale (and at a very high price).

He raced in, pleading with the owner of the shop, “But that boat is mine; I made it.” The owner looked at the boat, then at the boy, and said, “No, Son, now this boat is mine. If you want it, you have to buy it.”

So the lad sold virtually everything he had, took the money and bought back his own handiwork. His friends didn’t understand. But as he clutched it to himself in love, he only could answer, “Now it’s twice mine; I made it, and now I bought it. It’s twice mine.”

That’s how God feels about us. He made us, but we sailed the oceans caught up in the winds of sin, seemingly never to be reconciled again. But He looked down in the windows of the world, and loved us so much that He determined, even if it cost Him *everything*, He would buy back what was already His. And on Calvary, He did just that. He paid the ransom. He set us free.

But there is a choice involved. The choice is not whether or not to attempt to find a way back to God. The choice is whether or not to take the way God has provided. That way is by absolute abandonment of your own efforts, simply saying, “Yes,” to God’s offer to save you.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, it is not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8,9 NKJV)

There Is Only One

In our next study, we'll look at that word *saved*, and at the word *all*, but for now we must simply concentrate on one fact. That fact is that there is only one God, and only one way back to God, through the one mediator, the man, Christ Jesus.

That is the method. The person is you. If you have never personally trusted Christ, or are not sure, you have a decision to make. God could have made it complicated, but He chose to confound the wise by making it so simple that no man could glory in His Presence. He doesn't need your help to save you; He doesn't need you to simplify it; it's already so simple a child can understand it.

You don't need to join a church to be saved. You don't need to have an emotional experience to be saved. You don't need to walk down an aisle to be saved. All you need to do to be saved has been done by Jesus. All you need to do is say yes to Him.

Just acknowledge that your sins created the chasm between you and God, and that your efforts will never bridge that chasm, so God did it for you in Christ. Then ask Him to forgive your sins, to wash you clean in the blood of his Son, and to come into your life and make it new. He will. He said He would. And He always keeps His Word. He does not lie.

I meet people every day who say they don't know whether or not they've asked Christ into their hearts. If you are not sure, does it make sense to hope? Would you say to that doctor who had a sure cure for you, "I don't know if I ever took the pill or not, I hope I did?" No. Make certain. Make absolutely certain. Be sure. Be confident. Drive down a stake in the ground for all eternity. Ask Jesus Christ to enter your life today, *and be born again*. A person knows if they're born. You, too, can know for sure. All you have to do is ask Him.

You say, "What a simple plan."
Yes, what a simple plan, indeed.
But, Beloved, according to God's Word...
It's the only one.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer