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**The *All*
In God's
Call**

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Series: I Timothy

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If someone were to ask you what the most important word in the Bible is, you might have trouble coming up with an answer. Some might simply say "Jesus". Others might say "grace". Others might say "mercy". (And, of course, to a degree, everyone would be right). There is one word, however, that might be overlooked that could equally qualify. It is one of the shortest English words in all of Scripture, yet it is a word, without which you and I might well be lost and on our way to an eternal hell. It is a word that takes all of the question marks out of our self-righteousness and exposes us as the sinners that we are. It is a word that takes the mercy of God and the grace of God and spreads them out uniformly until there is not a soul they do not touch. It is a word that makes Calvary essential, but also makes it adequate. It is a word that brought equality to the slave, equality to women, equality to every race and age. And I hope you won't take this word lightly, but that everytime you pass it in Scripture you will stop and underline it and fall before God and thank Him for that one word.

It is a word that crushes the barriers that man creates to make the Gospel exclusive. It is a word that makes the whole world a mission field and makes all Christians missionaries. It is that tiny little word which is tucked insignificantly into the context of so many crucial Biblical passages that totally changes the complexion of their meaning, yet it is so often overlooked by those who are interpreting them. It is that precious word spelled *A-L-L!*

All, no other word in the Bible says so much, so simply. No other word so defines the heart of God in so many ways. No other word says it all, like that tiny word, all. And it is that word that arrests our attention in I Timothy 2 as we continue to work our way (though every so slowly to be sure) through the pages of that letter of instruction and exhortation the great Apostle Paul wrote to his young protégé. Right in the midst of his dissertation on prayer at the beginning of chapter two, Paul makes two statements that are so simple in nature, they might well be passed over, but are so important we must not overlook them and no truths in this epistle

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are more important. The passage says,

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 one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

who gave himself a ransom for *all* men—the testimony given in its proper time. (I Timothy 2:3-6 NIV)

Our word appears twice in that passage, and in those two sentences alone, it stretches to the height and depth and breadth of God's love and wraps it all in a parcel of mercy the size of eternity. Our study today will encompass that passage. We will seek to cross-reference that word through the New Testament and will take a brief look at the remainder of that opening statement.

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I- The All in God's Word

II- The All in God's Plan

III- The All in God's Love

IV- The All in God's Call

I- THE ALL IN GOD'S WORD

That tiny word *all* appears in Scripture many different times in many different ways, but virtually every occurrence is, in essence, an exclamation mark that eliminates *any excuse man might have for not trusting God*. It literally means, "that which is inclusive without reservation". It means "the totality of that which is spoken of, so encompassed that no exceptions exist." It means that when God says *all*, He means that to try to find an escape clause is futile. Thus, whatever the subject is about, it is settled. We will look first at the *all* in God's Word, as it relates to the nature of man, the nature of God, and finally the provision of God. Here are some examples:

The Word *All* and the Nature of Man

God clearly defines the problem of the nature of man by using that word *all*. Had He used *any other word*, man would have a way of escape. But He didn't. *Any other description of our sinfulness* would have resulted in a *relative* separation from God, and thus in a *relative degree of need*. So God described our condition like this,

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Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!
For if there had been a law given which could have given life,
truly righteousness would have been by the law.

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise
by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

(Galatians 3:20-22 NKJV)

The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

They have all turned aside,
They have together become corrupt;
There is none who does good,
No, not one.

(Psalms 14:2,3 NKJV)

For *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

(Romans 3:23 NKJV)

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world,
and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men,
because all sinned —

(Romans 5:12 NKJV)

but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

(Luke 13:3b)

That ought to do for a start. The universality of sin and the accompanying separation from a Holy God are a foredrawn conclusion in Scripture. The issue, you see, is that it is not the *gravity* of your sins that separated you from God...it is the *fact of your sins*. You are not a sinner because you sin; you sin because you are a sinner. That sin nature itself necessitated a Savior, and the *first sin you committed* was enough. One sin separates a man from God the same distance as three million sins. The unbeliever who has only told *one lie* is as far from God *relationally* as the one who is an inveterate liar, for both have the same problem...they are sinners. In fact, the one who constantly lies may be a better candidate for salvation, for he may be more likely to recognize his need. The Scripture has concluded all are under sin. That eliminates forever the argument of *relative lostness*.

The guy who is lost in a forest three miles from home and given up to die is no more lost than the guy who is lost in the wooded areas of the Great Northwest. You can't be any more lost than lost. And if you have not yet trusted Christ to save you, *you are lost*. You are just as lost as that convict on death row who may have murdered dozens, or that dictator who ruthlessly ordered the

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death of thousands. You are not lost because of the magnitude of your sins; you are lost because you are a sinner, you and everyone else who has ever lived. All have sinned. Paul, who concluded that he was *himself* the worst of sinners, agreed that he was no more lost than the most righteous. Since Eve made that fatal choice in the garden, every man and woman has been born in sin and once they reach the stage of accountability, from that moment on, they are eternally separated from a Holy God. [Accountability is not an age, it's a stage; not everyone reaches it at the same age.] The first sin does it. So mark it down, that righteous, religious, self-sacrificing, unbelieving friend of yours whose life is the epitome of goodness is just as lost as that worthless scoundrel you know who is constantly in rebellion and constantly in trouble. The Scripture has concluded all under sin, period.

The Word *All* and the Nature of God

The second truth is that not only is the nature of man defined by the word *all*, but the nature of God must also be defined by the all-inclusive term as well. And I think it's exciting to take the Scripture and listen to how our God defines His son Jesus Christ using the word *all*. You see, if it weren't for that word *all*, you and I would begin to picture God in our minds and would think about the qualities of man and put Jesus and little higher than us, but still a little bit lower than God. It doesn't work. So God had to use the word *all* to describe Jesus Christ.

For by him *all* things were created: things in heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all* things were created by him and for him.

He is before *all* things, and in him *all* things hold together.

For God was pleased to have *all* his fullness dwell in him,
(Colossians 1:16,17,19 NIV)

In whom are hidden *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
(Colossians 2:3 NIV)

Through him *all* things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.
(John 1:3 NIV)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
(Matthew 28:18b NIV)

For in Christ *all* the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,
(Colossians 2:9 NIV)

All that belongs to the Father is mine.
(John 16:15a NIV)

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So Paul proclaims:

For from him and through him and to him are *all* things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:36 NIV)

Now think for a moment what it would be like had God created most things by and for Christ. Who would determine what was exempt? Suppose God had determined that in Christ most of the fullness of the Godhead would dwell? Suppose most of the Deity dwelt in Him in bodily form. Suppose some authority in heaven and earth was His? To whom would the rest belong? And who would know how much and why? Suppose much of what belonged to the Father was given to the Son. Just suppose God had in any of those instances eliminated that tiny word *all*. Eternity would be completely altered. When was the last time you stopped and just bowed before God and thanked Him for the word *all*? Thanked Him that you were included? Thanked Him that all authority belongs to Jesus Christ your savior?

The Word *All* and the Provisions of God

And have you ever stopped to wonder what the Christian life would be like had God left out that little word *all* in the promises He gave us concerning His provision to live the Christian life? The Christian life would be sheer confusion, our ministries would be a shamble, our peace would be uncertain. Think about these passages:

but with God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26c NIV)

Imagine, if you will, leaving the passage the same but taking out one word. What if most things were possible with God? Our confidence would amount to nothing. How would we know what He could or couldn't do? When could we trust Him? What if it only said all things but one are possible with God? Oh, the beauty of that one tiny word. What about this verse?

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he [the Holy Spirit] will guide you into all truth. (John 16:13 NIV)

What if only some Truth was His? Where would we go for the rest? To the world? To Satan? To the flesh? No, He said,

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26 NIV)

Praise God for that promise. And how about this one,

And we know that all things work together for good to those

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who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28 NKJV)

Try leaving that one word *all* out of that verse. Then try claiming that verse as a comfort in the midst of life's dark hours. And listen to Satan whisper, "Some things do work together for good, but not this."

How about Romans 8:37? It promises that,

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (NKJV)

Victors we are in death. Victors we are in life. Victors we are over principalities and powers. Victors we are over everything now and everything to come. How do we know? That one little word *all*. The same word Paul used in II Corinthians where He promised that

...God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (II Corinthians 9:8 NIV)

Try claiming that one without the *alls*.

The same God has promised us in Philippians 4:7 that,

...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

When we pray, peace is ours. Peace so wonderful it goes beyond all human understanding. Therefore, nothing can disturb it. And all because of that little word *all*.

What about Philippians 4:19? It says

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (NKJV)

Just suppose that one little word was left out. What if it said, My God shall supply most of your needs? How would you know which ones?

And what about the word *all* in II Timothy 3:16?

All Scripture is given by inspiration [God-breathed] of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (NKJV)

Oh, the *all* in God's Word. How wonderful it is.

II- THE ALL IN GOD'S PLAN

That brings us to today's passage and the phrase in

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I Timothy 2:4 that contains that beautiful word *all*. Paul has told young Timothy that God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”. Now that means all men, not some, not most, not a particular race or class, not some that have been chosen above all the rest, not a certain personality. It means all men, all women, all children, all people, all time. That's the heart of God. God knew the heart of man and he knew the kind of theology we would devise if He didn't put that word *all* there.

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through Him all men might believe. (John 1:7 NIV)

Selective salvation is not the plan of God. His heart's desire is that all be saved. That loud-mouthed heretic on television that blasphemes the name of Christ, God wants him to be saved. That woman who so delighted in breaking up the home of another family, God wants her to be saved. That ruthless dictator whose sole intent is to gain power at the expense of others, God wants him to be saved. That cursing drug-dealing gang leader, that vengeful Mafia boss, that lying politician, God wants them to be saved. He longs for each of them with the same intensity that He has for each of us. That is why Scripture says we must pray for all men.

We live life as though God wants all to be saved, but He certainly is more concerned with Aunt Susie than anyone else because we are. We get so wrapped up in praying for our own family and our own friends that we forget that God is just as concerned about that native in the South American jungles, or that prostitute who walks the city streets, or that humanistic educator whose life affects so many. God wants them all saved. Therefore, He thinks we ought to understand that if it's that important to Him, it's supposed to be that important to us.

I think that means that we are to take on the mind of Christ where a lost world is concerned. The mind of Christ is a broken heart over every single lost person in the world. That's why we read those missionary prayer letters. That's why we take note of all the prayer requests at our Bible Study. That's why we make a prayer list of everyone we work with, everyone we work under, everyone who works for us. Because God wants all of them saved—all of them. Granted, all of them won't come.

But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:14 NIV)

But you and I don't know who the few will be. And God wants

all to be saved.

III- THE ALL IN GOD'S LOVE

Therefore, the all in God's plan energized the all in God's love. Because God desired that all men be saved, He died for all men. Not for a chosen few.

Romans 8:32 says:

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (NIV)

II Corinthians 5:15 adds,

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (NIV)

And it's what our passage in I Timothy goes on to say,

Who [God our Savior] gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.

Jesus Christ shed His precious blood without prejudice or partiality. It is not just "whosoever will, may come". That gives the impression that God is willing to make allowances for all men. That's not it. It means that God's heart so longs for each and every man or woman to be saved, that were that man or woman the only one to ever live, Jesus would have died just for them. In fact, He did.

He gave Himself a ransom for all men. That literally means He gave Himself a ransom for each and every person. So that guy who works in your office that you can't stand, stands tall in God's sight. Jesus died for him. Just for him, and He wants you to pray that he be saved. That woman who treats your children so spitefully, Jesus died for her. And He allowed her to cross your path and to become your enemy, so that, in obedience to divine command, you might pray for her salvation. He longs for her to be saved. He doesn't just think it would be nice. He longs for her salvation. And He expects you to do the same. Yes, He understands the burden you carry for your family, for your parents, for your friends. He, too, wants them saved. But don't overlook the all in God's call. He wants all men to be saved.

Study that word all. I pray that some of you would feel constrained to start an "All" notebook just to categorize those *alls* in Scripture. Or at least underline them in your Bible and recognize that God is

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wiping away the excuses of men and is giving us His absolutes. He is absolutely telling us what the nature of man is, absolutely telling us what the nature of God is, absolutely telling us the plan of God and absolutely guaranteeing the love of God.

IV- THE ALL IN GOD'S CALL

Paul concludes his exhortation on praying for all men with these words,

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 2:7 NIV)

Here is why Paul was so intent on communicating his plea for prayer. Here, in fact, was Paul's blueprint for living, the reason God had placed him on planet earth. And here is the reason you and I are here, as well. In fact, no other reason exists that is even of relative importance. It is the three-fold plan of the mission of the church and the threefold calling of every Christian.

First of all, Paul says, "God appointed me a herald". A herald is one who calls out a warning, who announces the coming of another. Not everyone will pay attention. Some will ignore His coming. Some will ridicule His coming. But if the herald has done his job, no one will be unaware of His coming. Paul had been appointed by God to announce the Coming of the King, to call men to repentance so that when He arrives, they will be ready for His appearing. Paul's primary calling was to proclaim the Gospel. And that is our primary calling as well, as individuals, as a church, and as the body of Christ as a whole. And to the degree that anything comes between us and the mandate of evangelism, we are in disobedience to the primary purpose of God. Those things may be good. They may be relevant. They may be redemptive in nature, socially needful, emotionally beneficial. But, remember, except a man is born again, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God because He is lost.

The mission of the church is evangelism. The message of the church is the cross. The mentality of the church is to have a burden for the lost that is so great that we take on the mind of Christ. It is the kind of attitude the angels in heaven have when they stop what they are doing the moment one person comes to Christ and begin to sing praises. We tend to yawn, "It's good that the church is addressing the issues of the day, the family, the community, education, the issues of the electorate." That is important but there is only one issue that will remain through eternity and that is the

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issue of the souls of men.

Those who are lost will be eternally lost. When Jesus comes, it will no longer be important who was elected for president; who took what position on what doctrine; what color the pews were; or how many cars could park in the parking lot. When Jesus comes, only those who heard the Gospel and said, "Yes," will have life. Everyone else will spend eternity in hell, separated from God, and separated from those they love in an endless eternity, "where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched". Paul was a herald. And so are you. And so am I. We have one basic calling—to call men to repentance. And the *all* in that call means that no one is excluded, no one ignored.

Secondly, Paul was an apostle. He was a *sent-one*. He was an acknowledged ambassador sent forth from where he was to wherever people were who had not heard, first to Jerusalem, then to Judea, then to Samaria, and then finally to the uttermost parts of the earth. The church was never commissioned to draw a three mile circle around its buildings and call that its world. The church was to send and to go. Thus, the responsibility we have as a fellowship to the mission ministry of the body of Christ is the second part of that three-fold calling of God. And as this passage so clearly says, we must pray for all the things our missionaries ask us to pray for. That is a mandate. It is a divine commandment. We must send, we must pray, and we must, when called, go. And if you have limited God as to where or when He can send you with His-Story, forget it. There is an *all* in God's *call*. He can send you anywhere He chooses anytime He chooses.

Finally, Paul was a teacher. He not only proclaimed, He not only went, He explained to those who believed how to live the Christian life. So there you have the *all in God's call*. All believers were to pray all the time for all men that they might be saved and come to a knowledge of the Truth, because our God longs for all men to be saved. And all believers were to always be aware that we are heralds. Our task is to call the lost to repentance. We are sent-ones. Our task is to go wherever they are, whenever God calls, and we are explainers of the true to those who believe.

Jesus had already explained it in Matthew 28,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing

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them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

and teaching them to obey everything [all things] I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:18b- 20 NIV)

THERE'S AN *ALL* IN GOD'S CALL

There's an *all* in God's call, Beloved,
It's a call we each must heed,
It reaches out to the ends of the earth
And down to man's deepest need.

There's an *all* in God's call, Beloved,
It stretches from sea to sea,
In fact, it reaches out so far
That it includes you and me!

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